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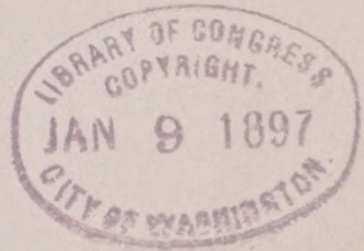
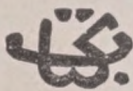
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# J O S É P H A .

BY ✓

GUÉRNARD MEUNIER.  
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# JOSÉPHA.

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## I.

THE porte cochère of the D—— club has been much in evidence this evening, and ever and anon the discreet opening of cab, carriage or coupé has been followed by the rustle of silken skirts and quick, feminine steps on the smooth marble floors of the magnificent halls where the sweet fragrance of the perfume of the day, violettes de Parma, is still lingering in the recesses of the stuccoed ceiling. People in the neighborhood can tell you what all this means.



The thunder of rolling wheels on the smooth asphalt at a late hour is no disturbance when compared with the boisterous frolic of still later hours, for the private suppers at the D—— club never begin before ten o'clock, and when they come to an end, nobody knows.

People whose calm slumber is being disturbed about just so many times each month are apt not to bear the kindest feelings toward their arrogant neighbor, and whether exaggeration or truth, they insist that not half as many carriages call for their fair loads, as come there to deposit them.

This of course is a very serious insinuation, an enigma which even we cannot solve for you. You know people will talk.

Still you must remember this: You are in a western town; the refreshing mountain air of the Rockies is fanning coolness to your brow, accustomed, perhaps, to the sultry nights of more eastern lands. You are far above sea level, and in the near distance your eyes behold the snowy caps of lofty peaks



on which the yellow moon is streaming her soft light. You are in the West indeed, the glorious golden West, in the days when this part of the hemisphere is buoyant with vitality, overflowing from the riches of silver mines, and where the people think of no tomorrow.

And yet, shall we turn you over to those men and women whose night-rest is so rudely disturbed on this exquisite spring night?

Oh, if you are a Westerner you will understand the situation at once, but shall we suffer your eastern ears to be shocked and at once initiated into the wicked ways of the West in those days?

Of course you are human, and your curiosity has been aroused by all this mysterious "holding back." After all, you will only hear some reports, exaggerated no doubt, and you will notice significant little nods of the head, and promise discretion.

An hour later, when you settle down in a comfortable corner of the hotel's saloon, you will forget your promise, however, over a



glass of strong beverage and a fragrant Havana, and you will tell your brother drummer or cousin or traveling companion, that Mr. This, whose wife is at the D—— Opera House with a younger fellow, thinking her husband on his way to the mines, is having a gay old time at the club; or that Miss Somebodyelse is one of the party; or Mrs. So-and-so who hails from L——, where Mr. So-and-so, her husband, is a wealthy banker, has stopped off for a few days on her way East just to say how-do-you-do to old friends and to refresh sweet memories of the past.

But you must not forget the fact that you are several thousand feet above the sea-level, that you feel yourself, as though you would like to faire la noce, and before you know it, you may not have been too scrupulous in counting your various whiskies and sodas, and perchance may find yourself in the morning at any other place but your hotel, where you should be. But of course, you are in the West, the air is so light and brisk, and one feels quite different. Pardon me, confrère, if I judge you by myself.



But had you followed me, I would have taken you through the brightly-lighted marble hall, over carpeted oaken staircases, I would have coaxed you into the barroom and shown you the silver dollars in the floor tiling in front of the buffet.

And presently we would have followed the sound of popping champagne corks and you would have beheld before you an old English hall, beautifully decorated for the occasion—you would have seen with your own eyes the banker's wife from L——, and Mr. This, whose wife had gone to the opera, in order to forget the "sad departure of her beloved husband."

You would have felt at home at once, too, among this jolly, good-natured crowd, and if your name had been Mr. John Sullivan, the "Mr." and "Sullivan" would have been discarded at once—presto—you would have found yourself simply "John," or, at least, "Sully."

Yes, you would have had a good time, still, you might have betrayed confidence once



again in the hotel saloon's cosy corner over whiskies and sodas, or, worse yet, you might have made this another excuse for going beyond your limit, for you know you did it the other night, and you also remember, you blamed it on the light air, our gloriously pure mountain air—fie ! our air of which we make such capital !

Well, you missed your chance, you did not behold the pretty girls and gay old boys, Jim, Jack and Nora and Jessie, and whatever their names may have been.

Of course, you would not have found much of your eastern polish, for the western “demi-mondaine” possesses little of the wit of her Parisian sister, whom she imitates well, at least, in conscientiously copying her fashions. This, however, is not astonishing, for “Monsieur” equally lacks the oily manners of a modern salon.

He has wealth—wealth accumulated by mining, large real estate speculations, and often he has sprung into prominence as millionaire from the darkness of a miner's hut.



Still, what are the studied bon-mots from effeminated lips, gathered at the expense of bodily development over books? Give me the manliness of the West! Give me, above all, its good fellowship!

In a country of Sunday laws and hypocrisy, for already this part of the country, too, has become a target for the temperance man and woman, the "demimonde" must have its peculiar stamp, which makes it more distinct, at once more noticeable than its sister caste in any other country.

In Europe, everybody drinks his beer or wine, as the habits of the country may be, and the respective region may produce more or less of one or the other.

The German sits down in one of his country's famous beer gardens, under a "Gartenlaube," or the starlit heavens above him, imbibing the amber "Gerstensaft," while around him nature is weaving, humming, singing. His wife has been busy herself all week long over her household duties, cooking, ironing, washing and keeping the children clean. She



has had no time for visiting, no occasion for interchanging of ideas with her sister, who is also married, and has, like herself, a large family to look after.

But Sunday comes, and out they roam into the fields and forests with "Kind und Kegel," as the saying is, a basket full of bread and cake and sausages and even Limburger.

In the depth of the forest, among the pines, beech trees and oaks, there is one of those old inns to which their fathers and grandfathers and before them others have come, and down they sit on the soft forest carpets of ferns, mayflowers, lilies, forget-me-nots, eating, drinking, gossiping, dancing, frolicking.

And at night, when the nightingales commence their tuneful song, and the moon's sickle is smiling between the tall tree-trunks, or through the green forest boughs above, back they go, singing and laughing on their way home.

They will have hugged close to nature's strong healthy bosom,—they will have forgotten their cares for the time being, their



toil will seem light, and they will enter upon a new week, recreated, healthy, looking forward to another Sunday with keen anticipation.

Is this desecration of the Sabbath?

What would you do for the masses of laboring men and woman which constitute the masses of the earth?

Or follow me to the *Café Chantant* sur quelque *Boulevard de Paris* de *cenève* ou de *Marseilles*, sit down with me under the protecting awning, by one of those round tables there and sip your wine, or, for that matter, do not drink, just listen to the music and other people's joyful badinage, and forget your own troubles.

Or ride with me on blue "*Lac Lemman*," to one of those pretty resorts which nestle on its green borders,

Take your "*verre de vin rouge ou blanc*"—(glass of red or white wine)—*de petit vin neuf* (of new wine) and look on the merry dancers or listen to the sound of happy voices from the waters of the lake.



Desecration of Sunday! Quoi? What do we live for?

It is a pity to think that in the United States, and, more so, in strictly American cities, a marked boundary line of quarantine is drawn between drinking and non-drinking women, and that the first, I mean those that do not see any harm to indulge in public, ordering their little bottle with their dinner, are at once the focus for many eyes, man's or woman's, whose questioning glances seem to ponder who she is or what she is. It is a pity too, that more often they are not given even the benefit of a doubt, but surrounded at once with the odium of irrespectability, just because they have availed themselves of their so-called personal liberty.

And with all the Sunday laws, and with all the prohibition laws, there is no country on the face of the globe where there is so much insobriety amongst woman. And so much depravity.

You cannot accuse the foreigners either,  
As though we all did not know that they



are our own people who make the innocent German's Sunday picnic a scene of obscene drinking or a French ball at New York an opportunity for some fair one "demimon-daine or dame de nobilité dorée," to produce a dream of her corrupted, impure imagination in some daring combination of tights, bare parts and a something, a nothing, about her person which she calls Frenchy.

I think it is the restricted personal liberty of our States, and the many dictates beginning "you must not," that drive more women to perdition; for the weak alone will suffer without opposition. The strong and independent ones burst their fetters.

But too often the broken walls of their prison reveal to them an unknown land and many are the wings that are singed.

In this age of woman's emancipation, her education cannot be too carefully looked after, for the new rule means self-dependence.

However, here we have been imposing on your good nature with some ideas of our



own, and we must go back to our story, our party.

We find them at their after-dinner "café-noir" and cigarettes.

The table is still burdened down under the load of massive silverware, luscious fruit, and above all, many empty bottles, for it is one of the rules of these private suppers that no bottles emptied during the repast shall be removed.

The chairs are carelessly pulled back from the table, in "pêle-mêle" confusion.

A forgotten napkin lies here and there on a gentleman's black trouser-leg.

Forgotten, nay, for his arm is tenderly engaged, thrown around a pair of white shoulders or a slender waist, or pressed into service for the support of a heavy little head which wearily, sleepily, has dropped over to his side.

Above all, the blue smoke from cigarettes, and mingled with the smell of these, the perfumes of the women and the vapors of the open wine bottles!



The conversation is animated—animated because typical, typical indeed, parceque c'est un drame d'amour (because it is a tragedy of love).

Of what other gods could those present be the devotees but of Amour and Bacchus?

Only a few minutes before we entered, a gentleman at the head of the table has read aloud the following article in to-day's paper, which begins our story, and which has been the cause of an extra edition.

We give it abbreviated.

“For years an eloquent preacher has filled the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of D——, and ministered to one of our most aristocratic congregations.

“His sermons have been printed all over the United States, and with them the name of Edward Drayton has become known everywhere. To-day, this man, adored, looked-up to yesterday, is no more than, to say the least, a common, ordinary human being, with human passions; to tell the plain



truth in plainer words, a deserter, a scoundrel.

“At his home there is a poor wife dying from the shock, there are two girls left behind, deserted by a wanton father, and into one of our best families, disgrace of a member has brought desolation.

“To the house on the Hill, which is the home of Mrs. K., there came to-day an ordinary-looking letter dated San Francisco.

“In a way, which it is unnecessary to make known, the D—— Journal has gained knowledge of the contents of this letter; suffice it it to say that it bears to Mrs. K. a communication from her sister, Mrs. Cobourne, of her elopement with the only man she ever loved, the Rev. Edward Drayton.

“These of course are the concentrated contents of the letter. A reporter calling at Mrs. K’s was informed that this lady did not wish to make any statement; but around the house, the truth of the report was neither denied nor admitted by the servants.

“There is, however, no doubt about the



truth ; we had hoped it might have been a rumor only !

“ It has been ascertained, furthermore, that the P—— agency of detectives has dispatched two of its most trustworthy men on the track of the fleeing couple. A call at the “ Monaco,” one of our most exclusive, most aristocratic boarding-houses and private family hotels, revealed the fact that Mrs. Cobourne had given up her apartments a week ago. She had told her friends that she expected to spend the summer with some eastern acquaintances in the mountains of California.

“ It was well-known at the “ Monaco ” that the Rev. Edward Drayton was a regular caller at the rich widow’s apartments. Still, as she was a member of his church, nothing more had been thought about it. Perhaps a few of the boarders had begun to form opinions, as could be gleaned from their ready talk, when the reporter called, but they had wisely kept them to themselves. Mrs. Cobourne came to D—— from the East some six years ago. She was one of the most at-



tractive women of D——'s best society. Her accomplishments were rare, her wealth considerable. She had taken a lively interest in every prominent movement for the amelioration of her sex's condition, and her purse was ever open for charitable work.

"The best relations existed between her and her married sister, Mrs. K., at whose request, in fact, Mrs. Cobourne had come West after her husband's death.

"At the parsonage everything was in confusion. The Rev. Edward Drayton left there some days ago. It will be remembered that the pulpit at his church last Sunday was occupied by the Rev. Karr Tutton, of this city. Mr. Drayton, for some reason or other, having asked and been given a vacation.

"However, already his absence had lasted longer than expected, and neither had any letters been received from him from M——, the summer resort at the foot of the peak, where he had told people he was going, nor could his whereabouts there be ascertained on telegraphic inquiry. His poor sick wife,



who has been an invalid for years, will probably die from the shock, her state is truly pitiable. She has no hopes of her husband's return, nor does she seem to ever have possessed much confidence in him.

"She would have given out many of the details of their private life, and the domestic relations at the parsonage, undoubtedly, had not the shock so completely annihilated her, that it became even necessary to summon a physician. Latest reports from the parsonage convey the idea that her condition is aggravating rapidly, and she is not expected to live over night.

"From the servant, an old darkey woman, completely deaf, nothing could be learned. From the two girls less still. They were convulsed by sobs, and to question them much would have been cruel.

"The parsonage stands alone, far outside of the city limits. It appears that there was little connection between it and the outside world. Mrs. Drayton had been an invalid, it seems, even before the family came West, and



one hour before this extra publication, it was impossible to find anybody that had been a friend and regular caller at the Drayton's.

“ Everything points to a well-premeditated flight on the part of the guilty couple; preparations must have been made a long time ago. The future, no doubt, will bring out many facts about the two actors. Their station in life being so high, no suspicion had been aroused by any of their acts. But since this affair has come to a public éclat, many things that seemed innocent will gain a different aspect. The prominence of the parties and the lack of more proofs make it difficult for us to say more at the present time.

“ These, however, remain indisputable facts: a well-known famous preacher, teacher of the gospel, has cast off his sheepskin at last, and stands before us in his true dress, as the wolf he really is. He has deserted a family, very likely will cause his wife's death, and of his spiritual position he took advantage in order to drag down with him one of the most respected women of D——.



“There is no excuse for him, there are no words strong enough to condemn his action.”

This article was embellished by a reproduction of the photographs of Mrs. Cobourne and the Rev. Edward Drayton.



## II.

I shall never forget the day, nor the nervous little chill which crept down my spine as the shrill cries of the newsboys were offering the extra edition.

There were many, too, that felt likewise.

For had we not all been aroused, calmed, delighted, feasted, enthused, by the eloquence of this man?

There came over me, with the news, all at one and the same time, a sensation of anguish, distrust, disgust and pity.

I had been his friend for years, and in all these years I had looked up to him as an ideal. The awakening was too sudden.

After all, man will ever remain a problem of guesses.

And yet, had I had an inkling of the truth, a suspicion of it, I should have noticed, long time ago, the difference in the public



utterances of this man in later years. When entering the pulpit, although broad already, he had been more austere. But gradually, and more so of late, his pleadings had become more practical; his speeches contained no condemnation of human little weaknesses, the inheritances of flesh, only an earnest admonition to overcome them, to do one's best.

And these views had endeared him to his congregation; alas! were they not an excuse for his own frame of mind, a gradual preparation of the public for such as had happened?

Yes, he had been broad in his views—human indeed. A strong male, in the robust, tormenting, passionate, voluptuous age of manhood, his wife an invalid for years.

And can any one else but an unhealthy, weak, sickly, sexless creature be an accuser?

Full developed, robust health means nature, and the dictates of nature are and ever will be a temptation of St. Anthony himself.

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The younger sister, Mary, had been adopted by a childless wealthy couple. How Elsa,



the older one, ever managed to extricate herself from the meshes of the net of over-assiduous religious benefactors, who after the reverend's misstep considered it their duty to exterminate the possible contaminating influence and inherited moral deformity of a lewd parent in the young girl, I shall tell you later.

How ridiculous an assertion this heredity of vice, inebriation, vileness, etc., mere psychical, physical monstrosities, who surely do not constitute some of the cells of the human blood, but are bred by surroundings and a lack of will.

Ah, human race, how weak thou art ; how thou pleadest thy very weakness and degeneration by these untenable excuses !

Hereditary tastes and desires, indeed, which must be purged from the system by some gold cure, hypnotic "make-good-believe" performance, etc.

Allons ! let us admit the truth, let us admit our race's degradation, due to over-education and neglect of character, but let us be just !



Oh, there is merit in these inventions and discoveries of our progressive age for curing diseases and self-acquired tastes, but the doctrine of heredity in that sense is all false!

Why not go back to the sublime and ancient doctrine of character building, "know thyself" or "I must, will; I will, must." Yes, so these good people felt it their duty to expel, as it were, the inborn devil out of Elsa.

Now, the life at the parsonage, although not an ideal one, had not been anything like what the unmerciful press had painted it.

It is in the nature of a reporter for a paper to exaggerate!

Whether he really gains an interview or not, with an interesting person, makes no difference to him. Nor does it hurt his conscience that his many lies afflict with more anguish and despair the wife of a defaulter or a murderer, or all the other relatives who are always more or less the greater sufferers than the criminal himself. In this way he really governs the flood of sympathy or an-



tipathy for or against the poor culprit. True or untrue his reports are swallowed, digested by the eager public, and an opinion formed pro or con. In this case the exaggerated reports represented a picture of quarrels, ill-treatment of children—a den! When on that ever unforgettable evening, that terrible shock came to me in the shape of an extra edition at five cents a number, I at once turned my steps towards the parsonage. Involuntarily there passed before my mind the former occasions on which I had visited there! I can now only understand, why I, an old friend of the family, had never been urged to call more, for every invitation must have been extended with severe heartbeating on the part of the pastor. Was there not always danger of a scene like that I had witnessed one day?

I remember the shriveled little figure of his wife, strapped either to a large rocker, which she moved by a stick to and fro, when at home, or to the seat of a buggy, when out.



A mere heap of human flesh and bones, mostly bones, of seventy pounds, the legs all drawn up under her by spinal meningitis, and one arm paralyzed, so that the reins had to be looped over her frail body, which was buried in pillows and cushions, and always grotesquely attired.

She would drive along, guiding the horse by peculiar twists of the body and with the aid of the one hand. How she ever managed to drive alone I do not know. She did it some way, and behind a spirited horse at that, of the broncho type, lank, well-formed, well-harnessed, but treacherous. She had, with all the lack of occasions for dressing, a mania for dressing what little remained to be dressed of her body. And always in the latest nuances, always in impossible little light shades, pale pinks and blues and greens, colors at any rate unsuited for an invalid. Her head, in which the bright little eyes seemed the only indication of life, was buried in costly laces, some very red roses hidden amongst them.



For an explanation, however, it must be said, that through the need of morphine, for purely medicinal purposes, the woman's system had become so used to a certain amount of the drug that she had acquired the morphine habit.

So most of the time the little heap of humanity was under the influence of the narcotic, fault finding, quarrelsome, exacting, overbearing and vain.

There was nobody in the town of D—— that knew the Reverend's family circumstances as well as I, for I was about the only visitor at the parsonage and had known Drayton from boyhood on, having been a schoolmate of his. The more I learned of his family life, the more I considered him a martyr. This wonderfully powerful man, built like an athlete, and whose exquisitely proportioned body was a delight to behold, had fallen in love with a slender, pretty girl, on whom he looked down with infinite tenderness from his towering height of six feet. It had been a case of love on either side. The



sweet equal disposition of the girl had even made me think of matrimony at the time; even me, an inveterate bachelor.

There was in those days in the sunny bright smile of the bride no other indication but of happiness.

One would have laughed at the idea of her ever becoming a Xantippe in the future. She had never been a very intellectual person, but just such a mate, as a man should wish for, whose mind would ponder over the problems of life and dive into the hidden folds of human nature. Yes, this man was then already a philosopher, a realist, and the perfect truthfulness of his speeches made them famous and read everywhere! She was very little a preacher's wife, fond of dancing, wheeling, golfing, a person that would decidedly never have been a success for missionary work. However, her smile—and she always had one—cheered, charmed, and won everybody, and the true mission of her life, as it should be the mission of every wife was: to please her husband. Her presence



became a recreation for him at once. Such a queer little girl-wife was she, that at times people were even scandalized by her sayings—frank, outspoken, *chic*, piquant—little things that would have sounded coarse in other people's mouths, in her's never, accompanied as they were by her peculiar mannerism. After the birth of Elsa, however, this frail constitution, so little made for the performance of maternity, and under no circumstances at least for the bearing of this giant's children, gave way to complete debilitation.

Her health failed rapidly, and the little bunch of nerves, the happy child-bride, became a stranger amongst people. But her pretty little sayings were often repeated, and the lack of her presence, to make them complete in her peculiar way, always regretted.

The physician had recommended change of air—higher altitude.

Now, just about this time, a call had been made from the wonderful city at the foot hills of the Rockies, to the then famous preacher, to take charge of a select congre-



gation of men and women, to whom he had been endeared through the broadness of his views. So, dear as the city on the river had been to the Draytons, the opportunity was one among thousands. The flattering offer was accepted at once.

Acting on the advice of a physician, the little country town of L—, only a few miles distant from D—, was chosen as a residence, partly on account of purer air, partly on account of the quietness of the country. There by the limpid mountain stream, in the bracing air of the Rockies, feasted by the incomparable sight of the range and continental divide, the invalid's convalescence progressed slowly, until at last she seemed to have become once more, the same old darling wife, full of mischief and old-time spirit.

Reports went back to the river town of the complete recovery, and, one day, they carried the news of the arrival of another little girl in the pastor's household. Shortly before this happened, a removal to one of



D——'s pretty sandstone houses had taken place.

Then broke loose, however, the revolt of the frail woman's nature against the unequal mating, and with it came the dreadful sickness. When, a few years after their removal from St. Joseph, my business called me to D——, I found, of the once lovable girl, the described wreck of contorted limbs, and a mind, clouded, crazed by morphine, Nobody else but myself could possibly know how much my friend suffered, for there were no callers at the parsonage, or, at least, they were rare. There were servants, of course, but they never stayed long. It seemed impossible to keep them on account of the irritability of the invalid, and a continual change must have been advisable, and even necessary, after each scene between man and wife.

These scenes happened without any provocation, unless it was the manly health of the preacher, the jealousy of the woman, that she alone, and not he, had to suffer, that called them forth.



Oh, these obscene, raving accusations! I witnessed only one. On this occasion it was that my friend had wrung his hands in despair and exclaimed:

“I cannot bear this any longer.”

With this short sentence, the ice has been broken, and there had followed a confidential account of his conjugal misery. Of the wife's mad jealousy, which drove him away from home and made it a hell for him, so that he would steal back to his study, like a thief at a late hour, and for days live, eat and sleep there. Then after these days passed under the same roof, his presence unknown to the cripple, pity would drive him back to her rocking chair, to receive what?

A thankful look, a few apologizing words? No, indeed! But to listen to another storm of accusations, to more jealous questions, for, where had he been all this time?

And this show of jealous mistrust was not only confined to the house. Strapped to her buggy seat as described, she would lie in wait for her husband, who was a passion-



ate wheelman, or follow him on every step of his ministerial walk, remembering anxiously all the houses he entered, and making inquiries about those that lived in them. It must have been a great relief to Drayton when he discovered the old darkey woman Susan. She was an ideal servant for his household, neither concerned by the invalid's excitability, nor apt to gossip. She had been there for years, a real mother of the two girls, to whom she was devotedly attached.

Although this gifted man was drawing, at that time, one of the largest salaries paid a minister, the extravagance of his wife made it impossible to save any money at all. On the contrary, it was often a question with him, of how he would pay all the debts contracted by her.

She would drive up to the various stores in town and order and buy on credit the most expensive, most unnecessary things. Her bills at the dressmakers and milliners were enormous; for in the same degree that her health vanished and her appearance



became older, in the same degree her vanity grew. She wanted to please, and to hide the ravages of disease. This desire, if not so pitiable, would have called forth any amount of mirth in me, had I not understood it to be a consequence of her sickness. In her healthy state she had been neither vain nor careless!

Yet, thin as the thread seemed that held her tied to earth, she lived on tenaciously, from year to year, although her death would have been a deliverance to herself and those around her. For her children she cared no more than a hen for her brood after they have reached a certain age. The sense of motherhood seemed entirely drowned under her unpleasant passions. Or, was it a grudge for the amount of vitality that their birth had cost her, and which she had never been able to recover?

And so the father devoted much time to the two healthy girls. The hours spent by this trio in the study, field or on the plains, must have been the only happy ones in the



man's life. How patiently he studied the intuitions of each, how anxiously he watched for the awakening of some talent or faculty, the bringing out, cultivation and perfection of which would assure them a possibility of self-support.

There manifested itself soon in Elsa, the older girl, a pronounced admiration for music, a quick ear and a wonderfully deep conception for the sublime art. First on the piano, her little fingers at the tender age of six faithfully repaid the parental patience and teachings by unexpected revelations. Later on, her childish little soprano voice surprised him yet more by exact reproduction of bits gathered at her father's church or elsewhere. This small, childish voice had been placed under the hands of a careful master, and its notes had won, through years of study, in sweetness and volume. Every note had been properly placed. Often one more obstinate than the others had been practised for weeks, until it had found its right location in the vocal register.



At the age of twelve she had learned all her teacher could impart. She had sung before audiences and scored many a praise, and at last she had been trusted with solo parts in her father's church choir.

Imbued with the idea of self-support from childhood on, this premature girl quickly caught her father's intentions. Her youthful mind had at once become awake to the commercial value of her voice, especially since the day she had been engaged at the church for a salary. Flattered by her master, and incited to greater study by promises of more brilliant results, her energy and assiduity knew no bounds.

Her career was mapped out in her mind. The attending studies had been taken up and mastered.



## III.

There was assembled quite a gathering of mourners in the parlors of the parsonage after the funeral of Mrs. Drayton, whose death had followed shortly after the elopement of the parson. Naturally, the sudden decease of the woman after these events was looked upon as the sequel—the result of them. This, of course, added still more to the general indignation against the man, already aroused as it was by his flight and the desertion of his children.

The world is ever ready to condemn, without remembering the proverb, that there are always two sides to one story.

Some of these people had gone back from pity, and in order to lend a helping hand, others were driven back by mere curiosity and desire to peep into the private recesses of a house whose doors had been open so lit-



tle to the outside world, even as little to the members of the church. What struck everybody at once, on entering the rooms, was the staring bareness of the walls, and the total absence of everything dear to woman—those many trifles with which she is wont to surround herself and to make our homes attractive.

Those little knick-knacks, tokens of love and friendship, which call back recollections of hours spent behind locked doors, when soft, white hands busy themselves over silks, linens, or the many new fads of our modern times; reminders of those dear days before the fêtes and the holidays, full of real or feigned curiosity, when we indulged in those delicious little teasings, hides and seeks, and guessings at what our *étrennes* (gifts) would be.

Yes, the walls were bare. If some curious ones have come, hoping to find new stuff for more gossip, by the discovery of some bit of needlework from the hands of Mrs. Coubourne, whose name had been mentioned in



connection with the pastor, some little gifts, at the work of which they might have seen the fair widow busy at her apartments, or some tell-tale object, picture, bref—whatever it might be—they will be disappointed.

Even the pastor's study does not give up any such secrets. There again, as in all the other rooms, the lack of a woman's presence is shown.

Its most conspicuous piece of furniture is a bookcase, the books representing the productions from all the great minds of the world. They remind one of the learning of the man, and inspire one with an honest regret for the fall of so powerfully eloquent a preacher.

Of the trials of his existence, the everlasting battle between reason and passion in the man's life, there is an evidence on his desk, an ebony inkstand with these words of admonition, "Ich muss können—ich will müssen," and a translation of the great German philosopher's work from whose pen these words have flown, lies near by, showing by its



much-handled pages, how hard this man had tried to subdue his passions under a strong will-power, but had failed, like so many of us do.

There in the sitting-room stands the old rocking-chair, with strap and pillows, and the invalid's stick; on the table a few medicine bottles and an open pasteboard box containing pills of the dreadful drug. A lady took up the lid and read the inscription, but put it back shamefacedly, when the tall girl told her: "Mamma suffered so much she never went without them."

But since we have talked of those only that came out of curiosity, justice demands that we should also make known the intentions of those who had come to offer advice and to take care of the children's future.

The younger sister, Mary, had been adopted by a wealthy couple, as we stated before. Now there remained only a place to be found for the older girl, Elsa.

A lady, dressed in deep mourning, was amongst those assembled in the parlor of the parsonage.



She was the wife of a large mine owner, and had buried her only child, a girl as old as Elsa, only a few weeks ago. She owned a palatial home on the Hill, and she had come to offer Elsa a place there—not as companion but as the adopted daughter of the house.

With her husband she had been to the parsonage every day after the death of Mrs. Drayton, and had talked to the children. It had not been without much indecision and hesitation, that they finally made up their minds to adopt the older girl.

They had much to give, wealth and all the promises of a bright future, but would the girl prove worthy—was there not perhaps some depravity hidden in her heart? Would she show gratitude for the sacrifices made, or pay back ingratitude for kindness?

Thus had they pondered, but not a word of their intention to Elsa. With others, however, the matter had been talked over and over again, and it surely had cost both man and wife some sleepless nights.

Even now the decisive moment had been



put off as long as it could be, it was time to act. Every eye was turned on the girl, when at last these words came kindly from the lady's lips:

"My dear Elsa, since your sister has found a place, it is time to think about you, my child."

She had pulled the tall form over to her and continued:

"You were a schoolmate of my daughter, will you try to fill her place in my heart? Look to me as your mother and to Mr. S—— as your father? We will give you our name, provide for your future as though you were our own, and in return only ask your devotion and love."

There was a silence of speculation as what the answer would be to this question.

Through the early matured mind of the girl, there flashed at once a true conception of the situation.

This offer, well meant, perhaps, was more likely only made from a selfish motive—from a "trying to forget" the dead child by the



presence of a girl of the same age at the same hearth. And involuntarily she called before her vision the picture of this departed darling of rich surroundings, whom she was to replace, a girl spoiled and treated like a child.

They had been classmates.

Emily, tall and pretty, raised like a hot-house plant, with ever a care for her every want, a governess to accompany her wherever she went—enfin—a product of too much pampering. A girl without any originality, into whose little brain no thought had found entrance before it had not been thoroughly digested by a dear mother, father or some other relative.

All this flashed through Elsa's mind quicker than it takes to say it.

The parson's daughter was brought up differently. The parental roof had always been a shelter for her, but the mother's sickness instituted her rather as the manager of the household. She had soon lost all attributes of a child.



Her education, or better, the lack of a mother's guiding hand, early developed in her a self-dependence, strange perhaps in so young a girl.

Then her father had instilled into her mind the necessity of self-support, when the mother's sickness and extravagance put every possibility of saving up for the children's future out of question. It had not been done in so and so many words, such as:

"You must try to make a living for yourself," but by careful feeding of the growing mind with the readings of works and books which would necessarily awaken a longing for an active life and the desire to make a mark.

It was a great offer, no doubt, this adoption, putting aside all cares for the future, finding at once a home and another pair of parents.

But could she bring her mind back into the limits of narrowness expected from these people, if she was to be like their dead child. Should she give up her hopes and plans for



the future, for the consummation of which all previous years had been spent in study?

Yet, quick as the girl's answer came, she seemed to be fully aware of its importance and its consequences.

"I thank you so much," she simply said, "but I cannot accept your kind offer, not even at the peril of losing your affection and sympathy. I could not be a child to you, such as you want me to be—such as dear Emily was. I would run away some day in order to follow my inclinations of becoming a singer, and then you would think me ungrateful. Papa has raised me for a purpose, and since his departure and mama's death," this with a sob, "I have taken steps about my own future."

"The only thing I really worried over was my little sister. She has found a shelter. As to myself, I shall take up my music. Poor papa has always encouraged my studies. Poor papa, about whom they say such dreadful things. I shall and will not stay here and listen to them. I am old enough to take up



a vocation. I shall do so at once. Besides, my music teacher, Mr. Vanat, has already made the necessary arrangements for a concert, by which he expects to raise the money necessary for my musical education in Paris. I shall become a singer."

The hush of silence which had followed the girl's prompt reply, lasted like a spell for several seconds. When broken, everybody was talking at one and the same time. But the climax came with the question:

"For heaven's sake, Elsa, you do not mean to become an opera singer?" and after Elsa's spirited answer;

"Yes, an opera singer, like Patti. My heart is set on that profession. I have been educated for it through years of study, and I know papa, who encouraged me, would not have done so had he considered it an unfit career for me to enter upon. Ah, why did papa leave us." She commenced to sob and left the room.

Still, nobody heeded the girl's tears. Her independence jarred the assembly. This



continual reference to her father, only raised a storm of general indignation amongst the gathering.

Inherited perversity. What else could be expected from a girl grown up under such unhealthy influences? What independence and opposition, when everybody was trying to do what was best; perform a Samaritan deed, as it were.

This girl's mind was impregnated with vanity of the world and hunger for its glory. Whoever had eyes to see could see that much. Would it be accessible to other humble thoughts, was it not already too late for a thorough cleaning?

But who had ever seen a red-haired girl other than strong-headed, vicious and frivolous?

Such were the remarks in which everybody indulged after Elsa had left the room. They were whispered at first, to feel the ground, spoken out aloud when the unanimity of opinion became evident, and at last the whole vocabulary must have been ex-



hausted to find words enough for the general expression of indignation.

It was already getting darker in the room when there was a ring at the door.

To Elsa, the shrill little ting-a-ling brought deliverance and assistance. She had left the room crying, she entered it again, her eyes full of tears. But through these tears there shone now a light of mingled confidence and defiance. The white-haired man, in an old-fashioned, long Prince Albert coat, to whose hands she clung, was her music teacher, Mr. Vanat.

A few words from him had sufficed to calm the girl, for they meant to her a world of things.

The concert of which she had spoken had already been set for the near future. She would receive the assistance of all the most prominent musicians in town.

Old Mr. Vanat was a well-known figure indeed, a veteran organist and the best teacher of vocal culture. He was no mean judge of talent, indeed his championship



surely would never have been wasted merely to please a little girl of some thirteen years.

That girl must needs possess an extraordinary gift to gain this man as counselor.

He spoke of the greatness of his profession, of the girl's talent, of the injustice to drown it under prejudices against the career. "Was this the *fin de siècle* of an enlightened century?" Could they name any profession, any vocation open to woman nowadays that did not offer the same temptations?"

After the self-imposed tutelage over Elsa by the revered old teacher, little remained to be done, and one after the other the ladies departed.

Many little spiteful things were said, however, amongst the different groups as they walked down the wooden sidewalk.

"God forbid that they would buy a ticket for the concert—contributing to the launching of this girl into a career so full of thorns and temptations. Indeed they would not."

The mourning mother of Emily left the parsonage with a sigh of relief, as though



she had had a narrow escape from impending disaster.

Truly her eyes had been opened just in time, she might have spent years of love on this proud chip of a girl to find out some day that they would have been wasted on a venomous viper.

So everybody went away disgusted.

Not only would they be conspicuous by their absence at the concert. No, they would keep their friends and relatives away as well, telling them what a perverse, spiteful girl this young singer was. Had they been defeated in a well-meant attempt to put the girl on a straight road, they would do at least everything in their power to prevent a furtherance of her vain projects.

In that manner they would feel that they had washed their hands clean of any responsibility in the girl's future. For had not Madam B. a lover, had they not all lovers. And only a few days ago it had been published that Madam S. had become a patroness of the Monaco gambling halls.



Dreadful. To think, too, that one would not listen, but run right into one's own perdition.

Well-meaning but small-minded religious ladies, you little thought of the innate curiosity of human flesh, and that when you said to your friends, "You must not go," they at once made up their minds to go. Since the days of Adam and Eve none passes but what the old parable of the forbidden fruit is acted over again.

And so the night of the concert, in the beautiful city of D——, you would have been surprised to behold with your own eyes, if you had been there, which I feel sure you were, the faces of all those friends and relatives which you had driven to the theatre by the little words, "You must not go."

And this on a warm night long past the theatre season, when otherwise everybody would have been out to the summer gardens.

Elsa entered upon her musical career with



a decided sensation. In the first place the ladies had stirred up interest in the event by a regular canvassing of their acquaintances—not in favor of the girl—you may depend.

In the second place, the press took up the question of Elsa's future. One article, especially, had come out with a detailed description of the life in the parsonage, with an announcement of the concert to be given for the purpose of raising money for the girl's operatic education, and had referred to this intention of the girl becoming an actress as a case fit to be looked into by the humane society. The concert, following as it did so shortly after her mother's death, was much commented upon for that reason also.

That memorable night in Elsa's life, many an opera-glass was leveled at the girlish figure in black, with a white rose as the only ornament. Her hair, her eyes, her nose, were dissected thoroughly by scrutinizing looks.

However, the girl showed no nervousness; she had faced an audience every Sunday in her father's church, and her whole being was



saturated with that enthusiasm which makes people in public forget their surroundings.

When she drew forward to the footlights her glances swept the audience. But while many of those faces turned up toward her were faces of old friends, she saw them not; she only felt a sensation of perfect abandonment into her art.

And when the full orchestra had played the few bars of prelude to Gounod's "Ave Maria," her voice fell in at the right time, and on the full notes her soul went out into the fervent cry for grace, forgiveness, mercy.

The cry of a sinner conscious of his sin, writhing in the dust before the virgin, whose only redemption seemed to depend on the fervor of the heartrending cry:

"Ave Maria, ora pro nobis."

And with the storm of applause that broke loose over the house, there came the awakening to Elsa. There came the recognition of all the known faces in the audience with their eyes speaking a mute: "Thou hast done well."



There came to her the sweetness of admiration, the satisfaction of the power of the human voice which had kept the now fanning, murmuring ocean of human countenances spellbound.

She looked down again, she looked to her master, and with that quick intuition that helped her along in later years, and caused her to make capital of every opportunity, she appeared before the curtain by the hand of her beloved teacher.

There were no words necessary to interpret this action. It meant that she owed this man everything.

The concert was a success, both artistically and financially.



## IV.

You read the papers. Have you ever noticed amongst the foreign news, the howl of the French press, whenever a foreign artist is being admitted to the Opera Française.

Patriotism is—well, in art there should be no limitation to nationality, for art itself is cosmopolitan.

Nor was it spared to our courageous young girl to experience the difficulty of recognition of her wonderful talent in this strange land of France, where she had been for years,

Still, when we meet her again in her age of budding womanhood, she has already vanquished all the obstacles every beginning includes.

Hers was a lucky star indeed.

Her voice culture, perfected in the school of Madam Rossi-Garcia, the most famous



vocal teacher of those days, she had come under the notice of Signor Louis Chiolero, the world-renowned composer of the opera "Medéa" which he had only then written.

We have said nothing about our heroine's appearance except referring to her red hair, which had been looked upon by the ladies at the parsonage as a sure sign of frivolity and perversity, in a former chapter.

This red hair was the same indeed as in those days.

But while it had been then the cause of so many unkind comments, in Paris it was raved about, creating a regular famine in red switches and red dyes. So wonderful it was, so like a stream of gold in its rippling mass.

Her figure tall and willowy, had rounded somewhat, yet not enough to lose any of its feline grace in the superb carriage of the body.

And thus she was indeed a woman made to represent a princess, such as that in the story of the "Golden Fleece," a woman such as



might play well the part of a sorceress, an enchantress, like the daughter of Aëtes had been, in her youthful unearthly beauty.

She was indeed the Medéa, the youthful singer lacking for the representation of Chiolero's masterpiece.

And so a glimpse of Elsa, but above all her well-formed, mellow notes had been enough to convince the great composer that he had found at last the ideal for which so long he had been seeking in vain.

When, after many struggles and only by sheer tenacity of the composer, who threatened to take his opera to Berlin, the objection of the press, that a French singer should alone be trusted with the creation of this new rôle had been overcome, our Elsa emerged from the boards of the famous old opera house, this goal of every aspiring singer, under the name of "Josépha."

For in those days, although already thoroughly French, she still thought of her American childhood at times, and in memory of her native place, St. Joseph, on the distant river, had taken the name of "Josépha."



Since her début, which had been heralded all over the world, so extraordinary by its being at the same time a creation of a new rôle, a perfect revelation of a phenomenal talent, both of acting and singing, and since the rising of her wonderful star, thoughts had not wandered back as much any more to old acquaintances and the days of childhood. Even the little sister had been forgotten, and the old teacher at D——.

And so, when we meet her again, years after her début, she is a very busy woman.

Her greatest passion her art, and the daily studies to keep it perfect still occupy most of her time.

Everybody knows the story which has gone the rounds of all the cafés, brasseries, salons, and newspapers of Paris. The story about Josépha's rehearsing her famous "robe de répétition," as she calls it. A loose Turkish garment cut much like a bath robe, tied with a cord around the neck and waist. A long, trailing, square-cut toga, draping and hiding her superb figure, dressed in a tricot



from head to foot. For she claims it gives her more freedom to expand her chest, and her whole body a better display of suppleness when she rehearses in her music-room, an octagon affair, with a cupola and looking glasses, reflecting each movement.

And her duenna, who is also the accompanist, maintains that in this dress and in this room Josépha acts better, sings better even, than at the opera on the stage.

To be admitted into the privacy of these rehearsals and this room is therefore considered by her friends a token of extraordinary favor. Still after all, this famous "*robe de répétition*," may be only *ce quel que chose d'original*, which, it seems, every great singer must needs possess. And it sounds well indeed when propounding her method of singing to an interviewing reporter, the lady can say, "I believe in so and so," in our case for instance, or Josépha's, "I believe in the perfect freedom from any restraint of the body, a singing in perfect nudity if possible. For it gives one a chance to study the correct,



employment of every muscle in one's body and the healthy breathing of one's chest. My music-room is therefore always heated, summer or winter. So that if I desire to do so, I could undress completely without running the risk of catching a cold."

This, for her hours spent in study.

The other hours are occupied by frivolities of the times, typical appurtenances of a public life like hers, the life of a famous singer, and a very beautiful woman.

Paris has forgiven her her foreign birth since she has started in by faithfully spending every sou of her immense salary amongst its tradesmen.

When we meet her again, she has only just returned from spending the summer in the Alps, and a part of the season at Trouville. She is still tired from her trip, or the change of air, and is quietly resting on a soft divan in that same robe de répétition we before described.

In her hands she held a morning paper.

Back in Paris, her beloved Paris, only a



few days, her presence was already known from the fact of her popularity. A famous singer necessarily becomes the object of observation to the ever watchful eye of every lover of music. But when combined with her talent she possesses beauty and youth, and spends money as freely, as lavishly, as Josépha did ; her person gains the interest of those even whom her art would not have reached.

But dear as the ever public attention had been to her, sweet as this interest tasted at first, in later years so continued a notice and watchfulness of her every action had grown annoying.

She had searched the papers at the beginning of her bright career with avidity daily for notices given to herself—for criticisms of her performances, but this feeling had changed considerably as time went on.

She overlooked entirely the extollings of the press once so tickling and inciting, nay, she would have been surprised even had they not been in the columns of the dailies, so much did she expect them.



Now Josépha was no more a girl. She had become a woman.

Fêted by a little court of her own, surrounded by flattery, coming in daily contact with stage intimacy—could she still be the girl we left in D——, some years ago?

Thus when she took up the journal in the morning, it was not from a desire to read the stale repetitions of praises. It was from curiosity to find out how much of her private life the press really knew, or had gained a knowledge of that day.

For so many spicy little things had already been said about her.

Since she had become famous, the trials of her childhood; the struggles of overcoming prejudices against her profession, and even an account of how she had raised herself; obtained the money necessary for her education, had been published. No doubt this, her biography, was being eagerly absorbed by every aspiring student of music, with dreams of a like future.

The papers were delving more into her



private life, into her life of later years. She had been jarred at first by some of these little exaggerated reports; then laughed at them. At last she even looked upon them with favor, as an expedient for more popularity.

As long as they were not true what did it matter? Her conscience could sleep in peace.

Thus in everything she had run through the various degrees of comparison. She had been frivolous, she grew more frivolous; she even reached the superlative, our most frivolous singer.

For all had changed.

The little weaknesses attributed to her, so wrongly at first, had really become in years a part of her.

And yet, she even grew used to the public attention to these when her conscience had long ceased to worry her. So much are we all the creatures of habit.

And more than ever before in all her life, in the few days following her return, had she been anxiously watching the papers for



a new sensation about herself—had she pondered and fretted over the question

“How much of her private life did the press really know?”

But even before she had begun her search, even before she could reach the familiar daily column of stage gossip, page five, the servant presented to her on a silver plate a card, and on an approving nod of her magnificent head, ushered in the caller.

That he was one of the privileged friends of the house, we need not say, since Josépha made no ceremony of receiving him, dressed as she was.

“Ah, Paris is indeed Paris again,” this early intruder exclaimed, approaching and heartily shaking hands with the singer.

He was a young fellow of about twenty five, one of those sturdy American boys, as the athletic sports of Yale and Harvard universities turn them out at the parting roads of youth and manhood.

Why he had come to Paris nobody knew.

He was seen around some of the studios at



times with palette and brush, more often, however, at the track and the games, so that the "why" of his presence in the gay capital was really a serious problem of guessings.

Nor could he have come for recreation from assiduous studies. He decidedly did not look as if in need of recreation, and of studies nobody would have thought him capable, had he not had his diploma of Yale to show for these.

That he was enjoying life, however, and having good times all around, nobody disputed.

"You flatterer," the woman replied, "as though Paris was not just as much Paris to you, even without Josépha. Besides you must remember that, vast as this city may be, Billy Grant is not at all une personne inconnue (an unknown person), that I have been here three days, which I trust you do not imagine for one minute have been spent inside of my four walls only. You must remember too, that I have called on Laviere. Ah, I see you falter now. A confession, sir,



a confession, I say. Why the rupture between you two when I thought that you would ever be inseparable. Why this breach which the poor thing takes so much to heart?"

But, while a smile of annoyance and amusement had flitted over his face, he parried the thrust sarcastically.

"Ah, you are very clever indeed, Josépha, to turn the conversation on my most humble person. Laviere? indeed, you never took so marked an interest in my little love affairs before. But tell me frankly, are you not rather trying to avert attention from your much more charming own personality? It seems to me there is a gleam of guilt in your so beautiful eyes, some trouble hidden behind that thoughtful brow. Will you not confide in me, will you not have me bear the burden of your many little secrets? or is it something new, is there any truth in this entanglement between you and the Duc de Montpierre of which the papers have been full so long. Are you in love, indeed? Come and tell me all."



“ And since the papers have informed you of this famous case, have they not also given you all the details and more than I could impart? Why then repeat a string of annoying events, for no evident purpose, when there remains so much for me to learn from you ; if you do not wish to talk about yourself, at least about Paris, about our mutual friends.”

“ But if it were not from curiosity alone, if it were for some evident purpose, and on behalf of one of our mutual friends, to use your own words, that I had come to sound your heart, Josépha. If it were on behalf of a man who loves you as no other man will ever love you, if it were on behalf of this one man, whom you have driven away from you, whom you loved yourself. Oh, you cannot deny it, this one is back once more in Paris and I am his emissary, to plead his pardon, his admission before you.”

The young man talking thus had become quite serious, as though pleading his own case, not another's, but Josépha's face was livid with emotion.



“Clarence Willard back in Paris?” She recovered herself sufficiently at last to stammer, for there had chased through her brain, even while Billy Grant was talking, a train of thoughts. Of memories of only a few months ago, when her heart had felt the touch of love, when she had known the delights of this wonderful human blessedness, then of unalterable events which had happened since, so sad, so miserable. Oh!

She had met him through this same man who was standing before her, this William Grant—Billy Grant—for they were fast friends. Two entirely different characters, attracted to each other by this their very diversity. William Grant, the son of wealth, a member of New York’s aristocratic society, through inherited rights.

Clarence Willard a member of the same set, a parvenue (upstart), admitted into its sumptuous halls for his enormous wealth, a fortune all accumulated by himself, a self-made man at thirty.

He was one of those men that take life



hard, that look on the joys and pleasures of existence even, through dark glasses, seeing the fatal blotch on everything.

Of these views his education had of course, been the mother. It was that of a poor southern lad. He was a widow's only son, early called upon to support his mother.

His father had become a partner in a wholesale grocery firm on the Bay of Charleston before the war. Compelled to enter active service under the Confederacy, and little used to the poisonous miasma of southern swamps, he had died shortly after the declaration of peace, from a fever contracted during the campaign.

Had he been admitted penniless for his commercial ability alone into the partnership of this firm, which had grown rich from lucky blockade runs during the strife, he was yet a partner and entitled to his share of the profits.

But how painful must have been the surprise, when on the day of his death the paltry sum of a few hundred dollars, hardly covering the funeral expenses, was handed to



the widow, with the information that this was all the money due her husband.

In his over-confidence he had kept all his private papers in a tin box in the firm's office vault, even those pertaining to his partnership agreement. This box was found open, the proofs were gone. The claims of iniquity and crooked dealings brought forth by the widow could never be demonstrated sufficiently to cause a settlement.

The boy, ten years old at his father's death, on whose support his widowed mother thus depended entirely, for it was difficult for a white woman in those days to find employment in the South, acquitted himself of his task with a prompt aptitude for making money, as clerk at first, and later as the owner of one of those little corner grocery stores of the South, where they sell salt meats and putrid hams to the negroes, and in connection with which there generally goes a screen side-door, with the inscription "bar-room."

Thus were his surroundings not of the best. Still he acquired no vices. He looked at life



from a woman's standpoint—from his mother's. She was a very religious woman, who suffered severely under the change of conditions, moving from a piazzaed white frame building, surrounded by a beautiful garden from the corner of Thomas and Van der Horst Streets into the dingy rooms over the store with its noise and the humming swarm of flies around the empty beer kegs in front under the magnolia trees. The boy knew no associates but his mother and books, and he pursued his studies earnestly.

When his mother died he was only eighteen years old. And released of all other responsibilities but that of looking after and providing for himself, he sold out his store and went to New York like so many of the southern boys do who are not altogether contented with the similarity and slowness of southern life.

When he reached New York he had in his possession a few thousand dollars, all made by himself, and a great deal of self-confidence.



Indeed his business eye soon discovered opportunities for investment of this capital to good advantage. His immense fortune, however, had been made by lucky speculations in the oil fields of Pennsylvania, where all his interests were still centered at the time of our story.

Grown up as he had, under business surroundings, and one woman's care, he was timid in the presence of the weaker sex. Thus conscious of his timidity he sought to hide it behind a cold appearance which looked like pride.

Proud, however, he was not, but prudish and reserved ; awkward, never finding the right word to say at the right time when before a woman ; and mostly indulging in an imaginary conversation with an imaginary fair one, all to himself, of what he might or should have said, after he was alone again, Then he was never really of that frank nature, void of bashfulness, which pleases women so much.

With men, again, he was all business. A



person difficult to become acquainted with. And it was only possible for such as Billy Grant, who had not been deceived by his outward coldness, and who had broken the crust surrounding his whole-souled nature, to gain a glimpse of it, gain his friendship.

To this friendship it was due that Clarence had lost at least some of his old time reserve, that he had become a member of a swell club equal to his station of wealth.

Besides, Grant's mother, a lady of most keen understanding, a thorough reader of human nature, having taken a particular fancy for her son's friend, had drawn him little by little into her private circle.

Still at the age of thirty, his views of women were infinitely better than his friend's, five years his junior.

In his wealth, he could not quite overcome the parsimony of his boyhood. His new life of course had swelled considerably the amount of his expenses, but only in a direction unknown to his simple tastes before.

His ordinary personal wants remained the



same in wealth as they had been in his life of toil. He still wore a cheap suit of jean underwear, which indeed had seemed quite a luxury in comparison to his mother's own manufacture from clean-washed ham and flour bags.

Withal he was a fine-looking fellow, neat in appearance, *recherché* even, but never flashy.

It was further due to Grant's earnest solicitation that his friend had torn himself loose from his office and had taken the trip to Paris. Could Billy have foreseen the consequences of this journey he would not have urged it so much.

But how in the world was he to know the hidden fire in his friend's breast, which needed only the fanning of passion to break into an all-absorbing conflagration.

And so the two friends had begun by "taking in" the city, as the saying is—the varied curiosities of Paris. The descendance of Willard from French parents, their name originally had been "Guilleard," and his per-



fect knowledge of the language made him feel at home at once in the gay city. He even recognized many of the traits of his dead parents in the French bourgeoisie, to whose houses they were often admitted through some studio associate of William Grant's.

He began to understand his own nature better by the life amongst the French people. His very habits and thoughts, his very economy, inheritances of his foreign parentage, all.

When the opera season began, our two friends had often occupied stalls amongst the gayly dressed crowd. On one of these occasions Clarence surprised his friend by expressing the wish to meet Josépha. This was something so out of the ordinary course of Clarence's former life that Billy had not trusted his ears at first.

However, as he was a regular visitor at the singer's, the fulfillment of this wish had been easily within his reach.

So one day they found themselves with Josépha in her luxurious little boudoir.



And after that events had followed one another, the one following always more surprising than the preceding one. Willard became a different man.

He talked more, he laughed more, he seemed to have awakened from a long spell of lethargy and found that life possessed, after all, something else worth living for than business and money-making.

Those days of surprises!

At last, even Grant could not keep pace with his once so quiet friend. This feverish "come and go" from one pleasure to another, as though every minute counted, as though the long years of toil and deprivation must be forgotten in as many days, nay hours, of delicious excitement. There were parties, theatres, balls; always something, this or that, and never without Josépha.

But into the eyes of the man and woman there had come a new light; the reflection of budding love in their hearts.

Frivolous Josépha and the quiet fellow of thirty. Whoever would have thought of that?



And it had become a life dear to both, every new day bringing with it some new emotion, strange, but sweet!

Then the man's lips had spoken of his love, his hopes, his home in New York, the future—all that.

And Josépha had given a little start as if pained. She knew the trouble had come.

Farewell, dear days of mute understanding, when words have not been pressed into service to betray aloud a secret which our eyes speak, the touch of our hands reveals.

Yet Josépha had answered to his pleadings neither yes nor no. She had started only as if aroused from some pleasant dream, then clung closer to his neck.

With the possession of woman's love, man begins to become her tyrant.

Still were there then, at that time, no questions asked about the past. Not on the man's part, for he was drunk with tenderness; nor on the woman's, either. Oh, no—not on her part, indeed. William Grant, when informed and taken into confidence by



his friend, had only confined himself to the few words :

“It is an unsuitable match,” nothing more.

But after the intoxication of Clarence's first love had evaporated somewhat, its other little attributes began to put in their appearance—jealousy for one.

First of her art, to whom he thought she was attached in a much greater measure than necessary. It made him shiver, for she talked about it to him in the most glowing terms, as of some ardent lover ; how she would never be able to live without it. Never.

Then there were the many admirers that crowded around her day after day, each one receiving a word, a smile, seeming so pleasant coming as it did, from her he loved. Her, he felt, everybody else must needs be in love with.

But what offended more than all the rest, his delicate feeling of propriety, was the apparent intimacy existing between Josépha and some of these friends. At last the dread-



ful whispers and insinuations, slurs about her past, which he tried to leave unnoticed.

In vain he endeavored to persuade himself of the innocence of her free and easy manners, due to her life on the stage and behind the scenes. He only succeeded to forget them long enough when alone with her under her fascination.

Finally from a natural desire to know more about the one he hoped to wed, he had begun by asking questions. These, Josépha would answer with that frankness and light-heartedness so characteristic of her.

She would say for instance, when asked how and why she had been retained at the Opéra Française, since there had been so much opposition before to her entering there, even after Chiolero had positively refused to play his "Medéa" with anybody else but her in the title rôle.

"J'avais gagné la bienveillance de Monsieur l'intendant" (I had gained the good will of the manager) and add with a significant little gesture,



“Cela se fait comme ça dans notre monde” (things are done in this manner in the theatrical world), which would arouse his suspicion so much that his questions would be put more pointedly. For precisely about this same affair little hints had been dropped at night, when they were talking about all sorts of scandal, like men will do over their wine and cigarettes.

But Josépha would answer all these questions quite unconcernedly. She would throw her white arms around his neck, stroke his black mustache, parting it to imprint a delicious kiss on his lips—and render him so wondrously happy that he would at once become again intoxicated with her love.

Or, she would hide her face on his breast so that he could neither watch nor see the expression of it, but only feel the light tickling touch of a few stray curls under his chin, and the perfume of her hair in his nostrils.

Or, she would simply answer him by a long French “Clarence, Clarence,” his name, in which she would put at once all the meaning of reproof, pleading and love.



About the future he only spoke—Josépha never.

So had weeks and months fled by, Clarence Willard's sojourn in Paris already being extended more than once. He dined, he drove with Josépha—he all but slept at her home. After the theatre he would wait for her behind the scenes, ride home with her in her carriage, tenderly watching that her opera cloak was well up around her neck, and sit down with her all alone to a light supper, which was always served after the performance, whenever she had to appear.

Then, after supper, again, she would light a cigarette in her own mouth and hand it to him, while she herself would crouch down in her silks and satins on the carpet between his legs, leaning her head against his knees and looking up to him much like a faithful dog up to his master.

So sweet, so smooth, had been their relations, even with his fits of jealousy, which would give cause to occasional pouts, to be



followed, however, instantly by an indescribably charming "making up."

After that a feeling of how much they really belonged together.

But the hour of decision had come at last with the necessity of Clarence Willard's departure to New York, which was to take place in the very near future. It was in the early hours of the evening when Josépha returned from the five o'clock tea at Mlle. Lavière, the beautiful opera singer so rightly admired for her most wonderfully rich contralto voice.

She was dressed in a gown of red Persian silk, the creation of Mr. Valois, an obscure ladies' tailor before he had the good fortune of receiving the commission for this gown, which had really brought him into public notice, and which possessed besides quite an interesting history.

Mr. Guillaume, the world-renowned dress-maker of Paris, whose customers are thousands and amongst all nationalities, had flatly refused to destroy his reputation as a man of



good taste by dressing the singer in a color he claimed not becoming. A rupture between merchant and patron followed, and Josépha had taken her silks, a present of the Shah of Persia and indeed very valuable, to Mr. Valois, who with his rising from obscurity exploded at the same time the popular idea that red cannot be worn by women with red hair.

Dressed in this gown, her cheeks still flushed from the animated conversation, she was just pulling off her long black gloves when Clarence entered unexpected, for Josépha had laughingly informed him of Lavière's tea the day before.

"Je te donne ton congé, mon cher. Va t'amuser avec les autres, mais souviens—toi bien de me revenir apres demain." (I give you a vacation dear. Go and amuse yourself with the others, but remember well that you must come back to me the day after tomorrow).

She therefore understood at once that something of more than ordinary importance



had brought him there at this time. Her heart began to flutter. When he took her head between his two hands, kissing her fervently, she could see in his eyes the softening moisture of a tear—a searching, loving look, full of talking tenderness. Then he had pulled her down well close to him, his arms still around her shapely figure. And the excess of tenderness in speech and looks had even surprised her by its intensity. And so they had sat awhile imbibing well the exquisiteness of those moments. Then he had spoken, of the necessity of his return to America, where his presence was needed. Again of his dreams of the future, when he hoped her presence would grace his home as mistress and wife.

“Would she give up her musical career and follow him into a life of less excitement but more true happiness? A life in which her every wish should be respected as the supreme will of his existence. He would change his mode of living, go more amongst people, so that she might not feel too isolated



after the publicity of her career, when stepping down from the boards of the stage to the quiet fireside of their love.

“Oh, he would do everything to please her, even wait until the coming spring when her present contract with the opera would be fulfilled. He would return then to claim her his.”

But Josépha, to whom the impending separation had come unprepared, had stared before her like one in a trance. Of this one thing she only thought: her lover was going away. Then came a vision of her former life.

And when this man, to whom her heart's love had gone out, spoke of marriage, what would she not have given, could she have said “yes,” from the depth of a pure white soul.

Alas, she could not. She was too honest a girl to utter the little word, and she loved too well to deceive. Instead, she put on a blank expression as though she had not caught his meaning, and she made an excuse



that he must go now, that she would give him an answer to-morrow.

When she had left him there alone, at a loss of what to think of all this, at a loss about her sudden paleness, and especially the long, mute embrace and kiss, as though it was to be the last one, indeed—the curtain had dropped over the happiest moments of her eventful life.

The next day, early in the morning, a letter was brought to Clarence by special messenger, a letter written in French, in a stiff, masculine handwriting.

MONSIEUR :—La femme dont vous êtes amoureux n'est point digne de votre amour.

Si vous vouliez bien prendre la peine, de vous informer sur son affaire avec Monsieur l'intendant de l'Opera Française auprès de Mme. Trebini, la célèbre cantatrice que vous connaissez, vous trouveriez vérifié ce dont vous fait part quelqu'un qui desire votre bien être.



(DEAR SIR:—The woman whom you have fallen in love with is unworthy of your love. If you would take the trouble of making inquiries about her affair with the manager of the French opera, at the house of Mme. Trebini, the famous singer, whom you know, you would find verified that of which some one advises you who wishes you well.)

His suspicion aroused again by this reference to the same affair of which Josépha had said so unconcernedly :

“Javais gagné la bienveillance de Monsieur l'intendant.”

(I had gained the good will of the manager of the opera.)

“But how—how—how? ah,” he entered his friend's room, letter in hand, waking him up most unceremoniously with a short “read this.”

Instead of an exclamation of surprise, however, which he had expected, between a long lazy yawn, there came only these words :

“I told you before the match was unsuitable.”



But he had listened so long to these and similar insinuations that he wondered now why he had not tried long before to ascertain what truth there was in these cruel "I told you."

Who was this Mme. Trebini? Ah, he knew her well. A rival singer of Josépha's, whom he had met at Josépha's on various occasions. A jealous rival, indeed, embittered by the brilliancy of the American, supplanted by the same in the affections of Parisian opera-goers. On outwardly friendly terms with her rival, only because both being colleagues of the same institution, relations of that nature were more convenient.

Without any further hesitation he entered a cab, paying no attention to the earliness of the hour. Thirty minutes later he found himself seated before Trebini, a woman inclined to stoutness, dressed in a soft robe de chambre, munching her morning roll and sipping her chocolate, while apparently pleased with this call from one of the rival camp.



Indeed, Clarence had not been wanting for an explanation at once reasonable and flattering for his unusually early call.

“He was going away and had not been able to resist the temptation of saying good-bye to her.”

Gradually the conversation had drifted into the hostile quarters. And he had listened to the answer to his question.

“Qu'est-ce que c'était donc cette affaire entre Josépha et Monsieur l'intendant” (What is this affair between Josépha and the manager of the opera) to her smiling.

“Que c'était une affaire très délicate” (That is a very delicate affair), with his brain on fire.

“Qu'elle n'aimait pas parler de ces choses-là parceque l'on pouvait la penser jalouse de Josépha” (That she disliked to talk about those things because one might think her jealous of Josépha).

But presently she had told him the whole episode between a young girl and a lecherous old man—l'affaire entre Josépha et Mon-



sieur l'intendant de l'Opéra Française. Then he had excused himself.

"Qu'il se sentait malade," and he had felt sick, sick at heart as well as body.

On his way home he had met his friend Tombet, whom he took into his confidence. But here again he was to be jarred by the meaning words:

"And you did not know that?"

Thus it had come to look to him as though all Paris was grinning at him with this: "And you did not know that?"

He grew sick of the place, sick of everything, and once more reverted into the same old Clarence Willard—Mr. Clarence Willard of Wall Street, New York, a quiet, sombre man of thirty, with a pessimistic, hopeless look in his eyes.



## V.

“Clarence Willard back in Paris?”

“Back as you say, and I his emissary to sound your heart, to ask your pardon for him.”

“A strange way of asking for pardon and a confession at the same time.”

“Can you not understand, Josépha, I do not ask for a confession. I only wish to sound your heart. This Duc de Montpierre, supposing he had offered you marriage, supposing you loved him, if such were the case, you must conceive how cruel it would be to let Clarence come back once more before you. Times have changed. The duke’s family exiled, with no prospects of ever mounting the throne of France again, why should he not follow his own inclination, since he has not to consult the wishes of a



nation. Why should the Duc de Montpierre not marry Josépha the singer?"

The singer sat still quite a while after Billy had ceased talking, staring before her in a most vague fashion. She was laboring under a severe struggle between affection and reason. When she rose it was simply to step to her open desk and to pen these lines:

"MY DEAREST CLARENCE:—" You do not owe me an apology, nor do you need my pardon, for I have never thought of you but with a feeling of tenderness and love.

"However, if you must return to me once more, let it be, I pray, on your part with a mind ready to forgive, to make allowances for my many faults, the consequences of my public life. Thus alone, and thus only can we ever be happy together."

Which she put into a sealed envelope handing it to William Grant, who thereupon departed.

But no sooner had he gone than there



dawned upon Josépha the immensity of her action; her thoughts drifted back into the channel of her morning reverie from which had sprung the wondering meditation of:

“How much of her private life the press really knew.”

There had been only a few months between the beautiful past with Clarence Willard and herself as actors, and her return to Paris for her engagement at the opera.

Few months, indeed. And for once, in one instance, at least, the vigilance of the press had been eluded. How it relieved Josépha to know that.

How much the papers had fussed over her friendship with the Duc de Montpierre, this exiled prince of the French dynasty, who had come to Paris, entering the army after having been arrested for stepping on French soil.

A masterful stroke of acting by which he had aroused the patriotism of every Frenchman.

“Si je ne peux pas être prince, je serai



soldat tout de meme " (if I cannot be prince I shall at least be a French soldier), had won their enthusiasm. And there had been even a feeling brewing amongst the masses, a feeling to recall the edict of expulsion against the old house, which movement, the Republicans said, meant danger to the French Republic—a restoration of the monarchy.

While the young prince thus masterfully played the part of a patriot, fanning the growing sympathy of the masses with the compulsory martyrdom of his family's position, which, French at heart, had to live on foreign soil, he employed his moments of leisure in other directions as well.

Amongst the worshippers at the shrine of Josépha, his tall figure, his long, narrow face, were ever present.

It had tickled the vanity of the singer to see at her feet a real duke. It had seemed easier for her to forget Clarence Willard's sudden departure without a word of farewell, over this new sensation in her life.

She had been very kind to this young scion



of the old French dynasty, courting, as it were, his adulation, and awakening in his youthful breast a passion she little returned.

Public attention, however, had been kept away from this friendship between prince and actress, since the patriotic part played by the young duke in those days was all absorbing—too sublime, too great, indeed, to be polluted by a mere mention of a trifle such as a liaison between prince and singer.

Thus there was nothing heard about their attachment in those days, although it had been already formed.

Right after the close of the opera season in Paris, Josépha had undertaken an operatic and concert tour through Europe. It was at the outset of this journey that notoriety began to link the duke's name publicly with hers; that his aureole of patriotism was forgotten over his amorous persecutions of the diva.

At Brussels, Josépha had been surprised to discover the face of Monsieur le duc in one of



the boxes. Such was the case at Berlin. And while she did not encourage his glances of fervent solicitation, his daring advances of passion, she, at least, overlooked them, being as they were a daily occurrence in her life of singer and beautiful woman.

She felt even that sense of satisfaction which we experience at the sight of a well-known face in strange lands and cities. That feeling that makes us kin to each other under circumstances of that nature.

She was happy to find somebody to whom she could talk of Paris in the beloved tongue. She also appreciated the commercial value of this gratis advertisement, for every announcement of her appearance would wind up something like,

“It is understood that Monsieur le Duc de Montpierre is one of the party of the famous singer’s retinue.” Retinue!—treated like a queen.

Thus they had traveled together as friends, exchanging views over the customs of the countries through which the course of their



travels took them. Criticizing and laughing at things different from what they were in France. For that part is ever the most delightful epoch of our travels in foreign lands, our mute or loud criticisms. "Ça ne se fait pas comme ça chez nous." "It is different with us at home." "Wie ganz anders als zu Hause." All these little utterances, which show how much we are all more or less creatures of environments, and fond of our "home, sweet home."

Into these pleasant conversations, which Josépha possessed a gift to draw out of everybody ; whether she liked or disliked a person, she could always turn out their best qualities, much like one turns a sleeve inside out ; there would break at times a storm of passionate entreaties. However, these were received with a promising smile of future possibilities only, never with an outspoken encouragement. So while in Paris, the papers were coming out daily with long articles of the latest sensations about Monsieur le duc et Mme. la cantatrice, with reports of how the



prince was ruining himself for the singer's sake, the much-discussed couple were simply traveling together in good fellowship, and the young duke spent perhaps less money than he ever did in all his life before.

One thing the papers reported correctly, an occurrence at the Imperial Opera House in Moscow. Monsieur le Duc de Montpierre, under the incognito of Monsieur le Comte de Nemours, had had the audacity to applaud the famous singer first, an act entirely contrary to the customs of Russia, where the ruler is expected to give his approval of applause, by clapping his hands, his disapproval by remaining silent; a show which the audience faithfully imitates.

Monsieur le Duc de Montpierre, unacquainted as he was with this custom of the country, had wished to make apologies to the imperial head, but his card had been returned to him with this observation :

"That His Majesty could not find, in the whole Almanac De Gotha, the name of a family such as counts and countesses De



Nemours. That so far as he could remember, a family of that name only existed in opera, and: *Que sa Majesté n' avait pas l'habitude de recevoir les princes et ducs de théâtre.*" (That His Majesty was not in the habit of receiving the princes and dukes of the theatrical world.)

Josépha, tired at last of the attentions of the prince, especially as they were no more productive of extra revenues by strength of their advertising qualities, for her journey was over, had found an occasion to dodge the vigilance of her knight, and had fled to the Alps.

This was in short the famous scandal of Monsieur le Duc de Montpierre et Mme. la cantatrice de l'Opera Française, la célèbre Josépha.

How insignificant the importance given to these little daily occurrences of her operatic career, how much greater the amusement derived from them, the smile all to herself, indicated what flitted over the singer's face as she lived over again in her memory, the



days of that famous voyage of triumphs, with its pleasant remembrances and incidents.

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Why must this man, this Clarence Willard turn up again, now, when she thought she had learned to forget the heart-beatings of that ardent love?

Yes, why return now, when she had torn down the bridge between her past and a pleasant future on his side; unalterably, when she had vowed to live for her art alone, her music as lover. When she had, like a good merchant, taken an inventory of her stock, and made up her mind to derive a thousandfold profits of her ware?

Why had this man come back? Why had she looked at him on the other side across the mountain torrent, the bridge torn down forever? Yes, why had she beguiled him to plunge back once more into the foaming waves of passion, and bid him come back to her upon this land of hers, where there was no more room for him by the few written lines beginning "My dearest Clarence?"



Why? For did the fact that he had come back all the long way over the broad Atlantic not give her an answer? Did it not show her a set purpose. Must she not needs understand his change of views? Was not the meaning this that he had overcome his scruples about her past. That he was even then ready to forget them if she would become his wife?

The scruples about her past! Indeed, Josépha knew them well, since it was she who had written the fatal letter delivered to Clarence six months ago. Since she herself had been waiting below in front of his hotel in a cab and followed him to Mme. Trebini's where she knew well that he would be informed of all.

Indeed, she had been very honest with Clarence—very severe with herself. True, after her return that morning she had been waiting, hoping against hope that Clarence might overlook the shady incidents of her past and come back to claim her his.

He had not come then, he was to return now!



There arose the question that confronted her. There arose with it events, unalterable events, happened since between the happy past and the dark present. To think that she had not waited in patience, that she had trifled away a blessed future, on this man's side, in the short time of six intervening months, forfeited, because of her contemptible avidity for wealth, her craving for luxury.

Still the dice had been thrown. He would hasten to her on the receipt of her letter!

This she knew, and she must draw up her plans for future action. She must decide whether she shall listen once more to her honest heart, drive him away as before, or whether she must play a comedy of deceptions indeed, just for the sake of another short taste of bliss and happiness and forgetfulness—even possession perhaps; and this latter course seemed to her the only one. After all, he was but a man, different from his brothers, more virtuous than they, but still a strong man, able to forget. After all, sooner or later, he would have to drink of the bitter



draught of woman's fickleness or selfishness !

And with such and like reflections she put to slumber her conscience and only thought of the hours of bliss which the future bore in its lap for her and her beloved.

Thus it happened :

However the man lying in her arms an hour later was not the same old Clarence Willard of six months ago. Josépha's scrutinizing glances, diving into his very soul, discovered an undeceivable look of levity, a discovery confirmed by his pallid, sunken cheeks.

But, strange to say, Josépha hailed this change with joy. It gave her promises of greater pleasure than ever experienced before of sweet possession. It appeared to her even the only reason why this man had not asked her the questions that she had looked for—why he had closed her mouth even with kisses, when she started to make explanations—more yet—a confession, for her heart was running over with tenderness. She was in a mood when she would have laid her



whole soul bare before him—when it would have seemed salvation to confess her whole miserable, selfish past life.

Thus fate had deprived her of this opportunity. Fate! What multitude of sins—excuses—crimes—this little word covers!

This change of looks in Clarence; the sign of satisfied desires—of ideals—virtues immolated on the altars of human realism, human weaknesses! What avenues of possibilities it opened before the singer's eyes. How it diminished the conscience of guilt which would have hovered around her even in his very arms, had he returned such as he was before.

A relief the change was indeed:

She believed that he would be more her equal now, since he had at last descended from his lofty pedestal of inherited goodness to the sweet but sinful level of her own existence.

And such it really seemed.

No more the jarring little occurrences of jealousy marred the beatitude of their love.



It was all changed. The woman gave herself up with more abandonment to this man, feeling no more so far beneath him, the man accepted all thankfully without a question.

Still great as the change was, happier as their relations were, in one point Josépha had been deceived.

Her frivolous little heart could never understand the sanctity of this man's love. She still hoped. But why he had not long ago accepted her views of life, why their relations, so infinitely more perfect than then, were still no other but what they had been six months ago, that, she could not conceive.

Nor why he still talked of marriage, of a future, when she was thinking of that future with a dread and seeing, to her sorrow, the present fleeing without accomplishing her wishes.

Little indeed she understood his love. He would no more have thought of contaminating it by a careless word than if she had been the Virgin herself. For him, Josépha, even with her squalid past, was still an angel.



When he spoke of marriage it was a revelation to study the many subterfuges by which Josépha invariably escaped a direct answer.

She would fondle her head on his breast like of old and make him forget his question, as though the caressing of her red curls brought oblivion to him.

Or, she would suddenly at that stage of their conversation pretend to have forgotten or to think of something that ought to be done at once and excuse herself. Then, when she entered the room again, it would always be with an exclamation having reference to this something that had attracted her attention.

Little occurrences of everyday life were brought into play.

“Que la cuisinière avait cassé un autre verre” (that the cook had broken a glass), which noise she had heard.

Or, she would re-enter the room apparently excited, “Mais mon perroquet me rendra folle encore, voilà qu’il s’est pris une fantaisie de crier mon nom tout le jour. Cela ne t’



ennuie donc point?" (Well, I believe, this parrot will make me insane! Here he has taken a notion to call my name all day. Does it not annoy you?)

Whereupon Clarence would stammer an amorous "Si cela t'ennuie tu devrais bien me donner ce joli garçon pour faire des comparaisons. Tu sais." (If it annoys you, you ought to give me the little bird in order to draw up comparisons you know!)

Now all these things Josépha never paid the slightest attention to otherwise. For neither was she fond to play, "la menagère" nor knew the parrot any other word but Josépha. Being a present of a South American admirer who undoubtedly intended to stir up a sentiment of interest in the singer's heart for him over his manifested devotion to her in the bird's vocabulary, the easy exhaustion of which was, to say the least, monotonous. And so his cage had been hung up in a remote corner where he could practice his "Josépha" all day long, looking up sideways out of his sleepy little eyes,



And so the days went on and nothing new had happened until one morning.

There had been among the foreign mail for Josépha, among the letters from America, *one* just like the others that never failed to arrive every day. One just like them, in a man's heavy handwriting, bearing the stamp of the Chicago post-office.

Now, whenever these letters arrived in days before, Josépha would always betake herself to her music-room, where, as we have said before, a slow fire was burning in the grate, summer and winter.

There only would she open these American letters, and destroy them at once in the glowing coals after a careful reading.

And while at other times the tall French looking-glasses had reflected the singer's queenly form, in all manner of dress, nude even, if she was rehearsing the part of "l'Africaine," for Josépha believed in true rendition of everything pertaining to the character of her part, and she was never guilty of those anachronisms in dress in his-



torical plays, such as the "Huguenots," which mar so many of our historical plays of to-day—repeating her rôle; on these occasions they would invariably reveal her beautiful face with an expression on it of anger and disgust.

And so again that morning she had betaken herself to the same room, had opened the letter with the same expression of wrath and disgust, becoming very pale and pensive as she proceeded reading it. But while every scrap of former letters had been scrupulously burnt, this one did not travel the same road.

It was carefully hidden in the folds of her ample dress, as though bearing an important secret; later on, put away in a golden cassette on her boudoir's dressing-table.

That same afternoon she had sat by Clarence's side, just like they had been together day after day, still pale, with a look of distress in her eyes.

And again he had spoken of the future, of marriage, of a life of happiness. Again, at this



moment, like before on such occasions she had excused herself. To no avail, however, for he had caught her skirt and pulled her back.

"You always run away when I speak of marriage. Tell me, Josépha, why do you thus try to escape an answer to my question?"

But Josépha's eyes had filled with tears. She threw herself upon his breast sobbing all the while "that she could not marry him."

With this outburst of grief a wondering smile had lit the young man's face.

So often had he listened to Josépha's, "I am unworthy of you," at times, when his suit had been pressed stronger than ever, that he could not think of any other reason for her evident suffering but her feeling of guilt.

And so, following the trend of his presumption, he had tried to reassure her with promises of how he would never allude to her past; no more than he had done since his return. That he himself had been as guilty as she had in sinning. That they would overlook each other's faults entirely as man and wife in his own far home.



But even between his pleading, Josépha had torn herself away from his embrace, returning presently with a letter, the letter from Chicago, which, unable to talk, she had mutely motioned him to read.

Then, while his eyes had eagerly devoured the contents of the fateful missive, she had stood over him with her arms open, her face bent, ready to throw herself on his neck.

For now, when he must needs give up all hope of ever wedding her, might he not still love her like she wanted to be loved, like most men love woman?

And so, when the letter had dropped from his hands, when he sat there annihilated, overcome and silent, possessing *that one* secret of her life, that part of it, she had so jealously, artfully withheld from the press; she had thrown herself upon his breast.

CHICAGO,——1894.

MY DEAREST WIFE:—I have been conscientiously exploring all possible means of discovering the whereabouts of your sister,



who, as you told me, had been adopted years ago by a family in D——.

All I have been able to ascertain is this much :

It seems that after the reverse in our country's financial system, this family, whose name was Blake, had lost their entire fortune, involved in enterprises which suffered complete stagnation from this change.

The Blakes not wishing to undergo the humiliation of living as paupers in a community where they had been the leaders of society, shortly after this left D —— for parts unknown, covering up their tracks so well that not even detectives, employed by me in this case, have been able to locate their present whereabouts, nor at least to ascertain into what part of this great country of ours West, East, North or South they have gone.

You must admit, sweetheart, unbearable as this long separation from you, my darling, has been to your patient Fred, I have fulfilled my promise at least.

I have worked hard to achieve a thing



which seemed to mean so much happiness to your good sisterly heart. But since success is out of the question, since I shall be unable to bring back your sister, I shall not waste any more of the remaining days of my life, so precious to me, since I call you mine, away from you.

In a week from date, I shall sail from New York and remain with you in Paris, until your engagement is over; until you will feel at liberty to follow me into my western home.

I have kept our marriage a secret, since you so desired it, but fear my friends are anticipating a surprise of this kind every day, eluded although they have been—for the renovation of my bachelor-hall on the lake front, has made them shake their heads, and it takes all my wits to answer their many teasing inquiries without committing myself.

I shall bring you photographs of our Chicago home as well as of our summer residence on the Hudson, "Ernesthorst," and



especially a few views of the interior so that you may feel at once as entering familiar quarters when coming over with me.

You will have to bear the storm of my kisses when I arrive, as best you can, my darling, for I assure you I am starved and have been craving for them ever since you sent me on this chase, which you made a condition of our marriage.

With love and many kisses, I am,

Your affectionate husband,

FRED. S. EARNEST.

She had thrown herself upon his breast, remaining there unmolested while the stupor lasted.

At last, however, when the re-action came, when Clarence tried to disengage himself, there had begun a fierce struggle between man and woman, between her desire to save from the wreck of her hopes all she could and to make capital of it as long as she held it, and his unwillingness to yield. One trying to get away—the other hanging on with death's grip.



Then, during this desperate wrestling, between short pants of flying breath, her confession—unsparingly frank!

How she had met this Frederic S. Earnest at Geneva shortly after her concert and operatic tour, at a time when even the large receipts of this journée had not sufficed to satisfy all her creditors.

A man of fifty, with a ruddy complexion and jovial, pleasant manners, an American millionaire, a pork packer, making the continent with a jolly party of his own countrymen.

How, still suffering from the loss of his love, pressed by her creditors, she had been introduced to Mr. Earnest in a frame of mind when his half fatherly, half loverly, soothing way of talking had seemed so pleasant, so refreshing; when the lavish expenditure of money in entertaining her had at once given her hungry, thirsty heart for wealth and luxury, an intimation of his vast fortune.

And so one day, this man of wealth had come to her, excited, flushed, full of Ameri-



can open-heartedness and begged her for her hand; begged, as though she would be stepping down to him from heavenly heights.

There had been no questions asked about her past, no condition made on his part; the conditions had been all on her side.

A private wedding, the secrecy of which must be kept until after the end of the opera season, when her contract would run out.

Nothing but conditions on her side,—on his, sacrifices only; his wealth, his station, above all, his good name. Not even a demand for love and affection; a simple trade between man and woman; one selling herself, the other paying the price asked, much like Mr. Earnest would buy his live stock for his Chicago packing-house, if the price suited him. *Va!*

After all, what better could she expect with her past? Had not his desertion shown her the way men ordinarily look at these things? Yet, much as she owed her husband (he had paid all her debts) the distasteful hours of the honeymoon following her se-



cret marriage at Fernay, had opened her eyes to the utter hopelessness of this new existence. She had been very glad indeed, that, foreseeing in her clear, commercial little mind this result even, she had made it a condition of her consent to the marriage, that he must let her go alone to Paris, return himself with his party of friends to America, where he must try to find her sister.

Thus, really had she rid herself of him, for after all, what did she care about her sister, what did it matter to her whether they would ever meet again? They had been separated so long, grown up under different conditions, strangers indeed! But a capital idea it had been, so touching too, to send Mr. Earnest away on a "wild goose chase," after a sister, dead perhaps for years, while it had released her of her husband's embarrassing presence, afforded her so unexpectedly another short period of bliss and happiness with him.

Would she give up her art to follow Mr. Earnest in his renovated bachelor's hall at Chicago, to be indeed an old man's darling?



Jamais de la vie ! She loved her art too well to give it up for a life the short experience of her honeymoon had taught her to detest.

Marriage, divorce ; to enter into one was no more difficult than to gain the other !

Ah ! had this Mr. Earnest been another, had it been him, Clarence Willard, how different an aspect things might have taken, how willingly she would have given up her musical career to lead a life of happiness on his side.

Still, could it ever have come to that ? would she not again remind him of her past, or see that others did, like in the one letter she had written him some six months ago, when he had offered her marriage, when she had said neither yes nor no, the letter on the receipt of which he had hurried to Mme. Trebini's and had heard all ?

If frivolous, if bad, she had been honest at least with those she loved.

And since he had forgotten Monsieur l'intendant, what difference did it make if she was Mme. Frederic S. Earnest in private ? Had he even guessed the change, was she



therefore less lovable? Was love and happiness and passion depending on a name, a relationship, so meaningless when life, her soul, her very body even belonged to him still? Why was he not like other men, why did he not take life as it offered itself? Why?

Qu'y a-t-il qui nous empechera  
D'aimer encore d'aimer toujours  
La vie est dure la vie est courte  
Un fou mon frere si tu l'oublies !  
(What is there in this world to hinder us  
Of loving now, of loving ever,  
For life is hard and life is short  
And foolish are you, friend, if you forget it.)



## VI.

And so, if Clarence had fled from the Rue de —, if he had not entered into the singer's views, it was only because of the sanctity of his great love which Josépha's frivolous, little heart could never comprehend.

Because of that sanctity which characterizes a great heart's passion, such as Clarence's, allowing not even a contaminating thought of impurity.

Still after all, he was but a man, a man not like others before his experience in the school of passion, but much so now when his veil of idealism had been torn from his eyes forever.

We must, therefore, despoil him of his aureole of virtue, of self-imposed abstinence, since he had summed up his whole life, dissected Josépha's last eruption of passion, her



temptingly uttered "why nots," and came to the conclusion that he had really been a fool his life long, more so especially in the last few months.

Later on, on the transatlantic steamer, he had been surprised at the ease with which he had entered upon the new rôle of his life, at his aptitude of quick learning; for no more he shunned the company of others, wishing to be left alone with his all-absorbing love for Josépha, like he had done on a former trip, but more often found himself the central figure amongst a bevy of returning compatriots of the opposite sex.

And as every great passion leaves behind some mark on our countenances, a new look, smile, frown or twitching of muscles even; so the great tragedy of his affection had stamped his brow with that touch of melancholy which becomes so interesting to woman.

So quick in fact did he learn to play an entirely new part, so well did he show his disenchantment from his views of woman-



hood in general, that words escaped his mouth, words impossible in the *old* Clarence Willard ; shocking, frank little sayings which a woman will overlook quicker than coyness and backwardness in a man, for which she likes him better.

And thus it happened that Mr. Clarence Willard became a "number" in the matrimonial speculations of those who called New York their home, of those who moved in the same society as he did. And the "chiffre" rendered the problem—the calculation, a rather difficult one, yet more interesting, when it was found that he was no other than Mr. Clarence Willard, the oil magnate of Wall St., who had thus far so obstinately kept away from the 400's teas and dinners and ball and theatre parties; this same charming entertainer, the fluent French linguist, a man they had heard described as a miser and misanthrope.

So that when Bartholdi's "*liberté éclairant le monde*" loomed up in the distance, Clarence found himself richer of many acquaint-



ances, his card case stuffed with numerous little squares of papier de satin, with "At home Mondays," "at home Tuesdays," "at home" all other days of the week, and his note-book full of promises made on various occasions.

Many were the significant little calls, with more significant smiles which were hurled at him by all the varieties of voices—sopranos, sweet and bewitching; altos, emotionally deep—when they had landed. Little "don't fail to call," and "Au revoirs," and "à revoirs," which were not even forgotten amidst the general confusing acts of embracing brothers, cousins and fathers.

And on the evening of his arrival he had strolled into the club, having promised one of his steamer acquaintances, a member of the same club, to be "on deck."

He had met many friends of William Grant, listened to the latest reports of sporting life over foaming "Sec," and still later on, when the fumes began to loosen tongues, to the confidences of many a sinner!



Thus the first day of his arrival in New York marked the beginning of a new life—an existence in which he would do like others, love like others, and think no more of the past—just like others!

At the office, on the morning following his first day in New York, after having shaken hands cordially with his men, he sat down, penning a long letter to William Grant at Paris, addressing him “Dear Billy” (it had always been “William”) describing his trip, the many new acquaintances he had made and discharging scrupulously the wishes and regards of all those that had asked to be remembered to him at the club; of Josépha not even a word.

But even while he thus willingly ignored her he loved, even while he was addressing the letter to William Grant; there floated to him from the adjoining room the melody of a quaint old song, sweet and bewitching. His chest commenced to heave up and down, and a sigh came forth, so full of woe, for the voice was “hers” or much like hers and it must be a dream, oh sweetest of dreams!



And how long he thus sat, he did not know. He suddenly noticed the general quietness of the office only and a hot stream of sunlight entering from the windows, burning his back, for it was midday. Then, while lowering the curtains, he saw the emptiness of the adjoining offices. He quietly stepped up to the half-open door from which the voice still continued, not as clear as at first, but mumbled, as of one eating and singing at the same time.

Then he beheld the singer's figure.

Her back turned toward him, seated in one of those reclining desk chairs, her legs comfortably stretched on the seat of another, displaying a pretty ankle and a suspicion of white lingerie. Staring out through the window into the blue winter sky, munching her noonday lunch and singing at the same time through her nose, a young woman, at her side the typewriting machine.

But the hair, that peculiar red hair of Josépha's, and the whole figure so much like hers; could it be possible that there were



two alike, or was it a creation of his champagne-fed imagination of the night before.

And while he stood there, undecided whether to speak or keep silent, the mumbled singing kept on until it suddenly stopped while the head turned and her hands brushed off the crumbs from her lap, in another moment flinging the paper napkin into the waste basket.

But the one turn of her head had revealed to him another surprise; the profile of the singer. And unable to resist his curiosity any longer, anxious to solve the mystery, he coughed slightly, addressing the girl, whose face was flushed with confusion at thus having been watched, in French, like he had been used to talk to her in Paris. "Et je ne rêve donc point, C' est bien toi, Josépha?" (No, I am not dreaming. It is indeed you, Josépha.)

Yet, even while he had spoken; in the fullness of her oval face turned towards him, he had discovered a difference of expression; a greater youth in these features. Still the in-



tonation of the voice was Josépha's, for the girl had stammered.

"Pardon me, sir. My knowledge of French is very limited. I can merely understand it and my name is not Josépha, but Mary, your most humble typewriter; for, I believe, I have the honor of talking to Mr. Clarence Willard."

Whereupon he had kindly shaken hands with the girl, the touch seeming again as the other's.

And he had sat down next to her. And it had appeared to both, as though they had met somewhere in former life talking as they did like two old friends. He telling her about her resemblance to a very dear friend, this with so much sadness, that the girl's pity had found expression in a sweet sigh from her young bosom, her rosy lips.

A feeling of rapture penetrated his very nerves and blood when she spoke and laughed and looked at him. And all so like Josépha, and again so different, so pure, so sweet, so quieting, not with that instillation of heat and passion and heart-breaking.



And thus he had sat and listened to her story of herself. For there lingered in him a suspicion that this resemblance was too remarkable. That there must needs be a connection somewhere. Besides he thought of that one sister of Josépha who had been to the singer the ignominious pretext for banishing and keeping at a distance a husband of whom she had been tired in a few days.

This he thought of. For the girl's story, coinciding as it was in many points, her adoption by people of wealth in the very place of D——, their sudden impoverishment and departure from the West, might have been the same identical facts ascertained by the detectives in Mr. Frederic S. Earnest's employment; the death of her foster-parents, the necessity of making her own bread and butter; but the sequel, a continuation of the case, lacked only one prominent link, the memory of her ever having had a sister.

“Did you ever have a sister?”

“Not that I know; it seems to me my parents would have told me, if I had. Why do you ask?”



To this question, so natural as it was, Clarence had answered with a dissimulation of his real object :

“Because I myself never possessed either brother or sister, and often wished it might have been different. For I think there can be nothing more pleasant than to have somebody related to you in that close way.”

A sentence which meant nothing ! Thus, while still pondering and cursing his memory for not retaining the name of the other girl’s adopted parents which had been given in Mr. Earnest’s letter ; the girl said her people’s name had been Blake. He did not even form a resolution to write to Grant, so that he again might communicate with Josépha in reference to this singular similarity.

He remembered, too, Josépha’s “ what after all did she care about a sister separated from her so long, a stranger because of circumstances.”

It looked to him, that ignorant as the girl was of any possible parentage with this other one, innocent as she appeared to be ; she was best left alone in her daily humdrum life.



Little he dreamt of that importance he was to play in this humdrum life of the girl. Little he anticipated of how necessary the daily conversational intercourse with her was to become to him. How, inch by inch, gradually, his heart was to be imbued with another love.

Another love—nay, for he still loved Josépha. The other he loved only for her resemblance to another one, her very magnetism so like the singer.

And the girl?

Ah, her little typewriter soul fluttered easily into the net of his passions. Her sweet little American heart, so full of tenderness, of love. Her commercial little mind so thirsty for wealth, for dress, position, and theatres!

At first Clarence held this new love of his as sacred as the other—that for Josépha. But as, by daily contact, he became more and more used to discern a difference between the two; Josépha soared high above the other, leaving below a poor, pretty type-



writer girl, ready to flirt, ready to—no, but that he could not nay as yet; he had loved them both alike in a saint platonic way!

Then with the consciousness of the difference, Josépha's frivolous soul detaching itself from Mary's as it were, soaring back amongst his ideals of old; his new rôle suddenly began to dawn upon him, his new rôle, which he had played so well since his return to New York—but never with this one.

And how easy it had been. How willingly the girl had consented to have her wings trimmed; to be a little kept bird, deprived of its liberty!

And the delightful life afterwards! At first the Bohemian little excursions on the Hudson with everybody; a Sunday crowd of happy New Yorkers. Later on—the more refined fancies of the girl calling for a season on the seashore—a few happy weeks in the surf!

Yes, what a fool he had been! What years of youth gone to waste!

And one day William Grant had come



back with lots of news and many loves from one abroad.

The friends had shaken hands.

"Old man, how are you? looking devilish well!" This accompanied with significant little tapplings on the back.

Then, while they had indulged in these and other friendly nothings; glad to see each other again, and while William had unbuttoned to acquit himself of his various commissions from abroad; a footman had come in, with:

"The carriage is below, sir!"

Whereupon they had at once gone down together in the elevator, Clarence making excuses for the necessity of cutting short the meeting at this hour, with a peculiar wink of his eye, but insisting that they must see each other at the club in the evening.

"Come and take supper with me at the club at eight o'clock, I have got bushels of things to tell you."

In front of the building they had hurriedly shaken hands, Clarence entering the open



landau, sitting down beside a woman of remarkable beauty, dressed in the height of fashion; with Josépha's features, smile, and white skin, and her red hair, which Billy beheld gleaming far away, when the carriage-door had been closed on Clarence by the footman, and the carriage was thundering down the narrow office street turning into Broadway.

And then William Grant had dropped in at the club for a quiet digestion of all this unexpected change in his friend, ordering a sobering glass of Manitu, as though he felt himself under the effects of liquor.

But soon his own perceptions of these changes had been confirmed by remarks of others, friends dropping in at random, greeting him with: "Well Billy, old chap, so glad to see you back!" "When did you arrive?" and, "Come, have a drink with me," etc. Thus had he gathered a good deal of information.

"Who is she?"

"Sa maitresse, une inconnue, charmante et



chic." (His mistress, an unknown charming and *chic* girl.) "The trouble is, he is doing the thing too openly—in a care-devil way. Cottage at Newport, establishment on the Hudson, God knows where else. Of course, he has got the money! It would ruin me, it would ruin you, but that is not the question. The question is the publicity of this liaison, after he has been present and a guest of all the swell functions! Should not be surprised at all to see him at the Metropolitan occupying a box with her some day."

That same evening when the two friends sat down together to the sumptuous supper at the club, their conversation naturally drifting back to Paris, Laviere and Josépha, Grant, or rather Billy, as Clarence called him now, noticed still more the many little changes of his friend. The carefully dressed hair, the manicured finger-nails and the look of happiness and fulness of life. He noticed, too, the many glasses of champagne poured down his throat. And so he only related news in general.



Josépha's marriage (Clarence had not betrayed it) which had struck Paris like a bomb on a bright winter day soon after his departure, the news of which, although it had taken place some months ago in Switzerland, had been very cleverly withheld from the press, until the arrival of the husband had made it impossible to do so any longer. The impending divorce for no other reason but Josépha's refusal to leave the stage, although her husband, Fred. S. Earnest, the wealthy packing-house owner of Chicago, had already spent thousands of dollars for renovating his residence at Chicago and for the purchase of various other real estate in the mountains and on the seashore. What a pleasant, jovial sort of an old fellow Fred. was!

He did not speak of the hopes Josépha still cherished about another meeting between Clarence and herself. After all Clarence was no better than the rest of fellows, "Out of sight, out of mind." This thought, however, he had to moderate somewhat, later on, after Clarence's confidential



effusion about his mistress. Her hair so like Josépha's! Her eyes, her ears, her figure, her voice, shortly everything so like Joséphas, a complete counterpart; lacking only the wit, the fervor, ce quelque chose qu'il ne pouvait point expliquer. Va!

(This something which he could not explain).

And with this revival of old memories, their eyes had filled with tears of emotion; for both had not drunk too wisely.



## VII.

It was true, Clarence had shown very little consideration for the "on dits" of the swell set with which his connections had been a good deal closer, after he had stepped down from the deck of the transatlantic steamer into his "new" life. He was of that frank character which gives itself as it is, naked in vice or virtue, above board, making no secret of its proclivities, be they good or bad.

A man of course never suffers much from his indifference to conventionality, if wealthy and handsome, a good dresser and observer of the different fads of society. To a position of that kind and in every particular Clarence could lay claim. But while his escapades meant utter impunity for him, he could not quite escape the motherly admonition of some of his older lady friends who



felt little ready to have this sinner spoil all their calculations about some match between him and a daughter of New York's gilded nobility, by his recklessness.

How little he heeded them is needless to say, since we gathered the information about the publicity of his liaison at the club with Billy Grant.

About Mary Blake let us say this :

Her little typewriter-soul had kept itself unusually pure and clean. She saw her sisters of profession indulge in luxuries far beyond the reach of their meager wages. But it took more than just the thirst for wealth, and position, and dress, and theatres, to induce her into a life like theirs. Her case indeed had one redeeming feature : her love for Clarence Willard.

Their friendship had been an unusually happy one, lacking only the lawful tie, as it were, to render it as perfect as any other young household ; with a honeymoon, and later, the quieter pleasures.

Still the position of the young and beauti-



ful woman was familiar to all of Clarence's friends who saw her in his company continually, and to a good many others, not his friends but mere acquaintances.

By an outsider, one unacquainted with her relations to the oil magnate, she might have been taken for a young matron apparently belonging to the rich classes, very beautiful and remarkably attractive because of this her very unconsciousness of her beauty.

This life of theirs, so quiet from its very domesticity, so recreating after the man's toilsome days of business, went along smoothly. But there came a day of change, one day, a few weeks after Billy Grant's return, when the woman had blushing, confusedly whispered something into Clarence's ear.

And had he not known it? Had he dreamt? Had he been blind?

No, he had not thought of that, busy as he was with his daily wealth accumulation and his mind occupied with market quotations, and club, and turf, and regattas, leading as



he did such a carelessly pleasing existence and yet one so full of consequences, as he had just learned with somewhat of a shock from Mary's lips.

How innocent she must have been, how very inexperienced with the ways of the wicked world to let it come to that.

But the next day he had handed her a check for a large amount of money and he had told her she must deposit that in a bank and go away to an unknown place, whenever she felt the time had come and she must not return to him until all was well over.

Yes, all this he had done without any great self-command, as though it had been a daily occurrence with him. And he had said it in a tone of voice as though he had been giving an order to one of his clerks, in his quiet, pleasant manner.

All this, without any effort. Clarence Willard, he who had been so virtuous and so good and so saintly in his love to Josépha!

And so, a few weeks or even a few months later, for the separation was put off as long



as ever possible, there would be no woman waiting for him in his elegant carriage below, when the footman had announced his:

“The carriage is below, sir,” and he had descended in the elevator.

Nor would the carriage drive straight back to his establishment either, when it had turned into Broadway; but it would be seen waiting in front of the club where Clarence was taking his supper.

After a while he would come out with Billy Grant or another friend, stopping a minute or two on the steps to light a cigar or to examine the “tenue” of his turnout.

Then they would roll into Central Park, smoking their fragrant Havanas and talking politics, actresses, scandal—such as all good New Yorkers will do.

Or, at times again, his carriage could be seen waiting—even longer than at the club—before some building in some street where, strange to say, the smartness of the turnout would attract attention even in this great city of New York; many an inquisitive face



being stuck out of the windows. And when twilight was descending, Mr. Willard of Wall Street, the magnate oil king, would lead down the steps some swell-dressed lady, always good-looking, with whom he would laugh and chatter and seem very happy indeed. Truly, Clarence Willard had changed—wonderfully—badly!



## VIII.

So months had passed.

And one morning Billy Grant, espying Clarence in front of a newspaper booth across the street buying the morning paper, had run himself all out of breath to reach him, so that he could hardly impart his news.

“Have you heard the latest? Josépha is coming to New York!”

Then, being somewhat exasperated over the questioning look of his friend, a look asking him “Man, are you crazy?” he had uncere-  
moniously grabbed the paper that the other had just bought from his hand and shown him on the first page the fat-printed head-  
lines :

“MME. JOSÉPHA IS COMING!



“Abbott, Stoll, and Stiefel succeed in winning the famous singer for the coming opera season. Her salary, the highest ever paid to any singer!”

And then, right there on the sidewalk, in the bracing morning air of a typical autumn day, both on their way to their offices; they had perused together the article following the head lines.

Billy Grant, in his excitement, forgetting himself even to the extent of reading aloud.

Of the new rôle that she was to play, the salary of \$5,000 to be paid her for each night on which she would sing. And an account of her entire life. Her American birth, the scandal of her liaison with the Duc de Montpierre, her secret marriage to Frederic S. Earnest, the wealthy packer of Chicago, the talk about a divorce from him, her reconciliation with this same Frederic S. Earnest on his deathbed, just a few days before proceedings for an absolute divorce were to be instituted. His will, leaving her the sole heir to his immense fortune, so that to-day she was



not only one of the wealthiest women in the world, but unquestionably the richest one on the stage. Her love for her profession, so evident now, when with all her money and wealth she still remained true to her art. The kindness shown by her to American tourists on the Continent and the assistance rendered to musical students from the United States. Her kind sayings about America. How anxiously she was looking forward to her début there! A lot of other flattering things for America and Americans. Clever Josépha! making capital again of her flattery by utilizing it for advertising herself well into the hearts of the American public, while she was still in Paris, being interviewed by the *Herald's* representative in regard to her engagement by Abbott, Stoll, and Stiefel at \$5,000 a night!

The whole article, indeed, they went over together as minutely as they would have gone over some business proposition of special interest, watching each other all the time, for a revelation of their respective intentions for



future actions which they might have betrayed by a smile or a frown,

And so, while they were discussing the news contained in the article, while Grant was folding up the paper, handing it to Clarence, they had walked up Broadway slowly, arm in arm.

Already the news of the famous singer's engagement was the common talk of everybody, as they could judge from the familiar sound of the name *Josépha* and the still more familiar way in which people pronounced it. As though it had been an old household word for years.

Already some of the more enterprising stationery stores, availing themselves of the general interest, were displaying her photographs with a big placard, 50c. each for her *Ophelias*, *Juliets*, *Medéas*, *Elsas*, etc.

At the club they were both amused at Senator James'

"Well, dear *Josépha* is at last coming back to the land of fat silver dollars," as though he had fondled her on his knees when a little girl, or known her all her life.



Then they sat down, making the occasion one of a holiday, thinking no more of business. They ordered their cocktails, overhearing at times, between their own conversation, other similar utterances like from the Senator of Colorado. Sentences beginning "she used to," or, "she told me," all anxious to declaim a speaking acquaintance with the famous country-woman, when they, both silent about their acquaintance with her, still knew her better than anybody else.

In the evening, desirous of having a quiet smoke in Billy's room, they dropped in at a party of ladies, friends of Grant's mother, who had besieged them at once with all sorts of questions about her—Josépha.

Was she really as pretty off as on the stage? Was the color of her hair natural? Whether they had ever seen her dressed in red, such red as was claimed no other woman with red hair could wear and look well in? And had they ever met the Duc de Montpierre? What sort of a man was he? Did she love him? Were they acquainted with



Mr. Frederic S. Earnest of Chicago? Was he not the same that Mrs. Van Brunt-Riner had been reported engaged to? A man of about fifty years or so, with white hair and a ruddy complexion, nice-looking, but, oh, so fast? The same, indeed! His relatives would surely contest the will, or had he none?

Thus from that very day on, all conversation seemed to center around one thing only.

There was no topic more interesting. Already there were "Josépha cigars," and "Josépha bonnets," and "Josépha reds, in fact, her name entered into the different avenues of commerce.

And then this same center of attraction had descended one day from the steamer of the transatlantic company with her duenna and the parrot and in short the whole retinue of a prima donna such as she.

But Billy Grant, possessing, like many of us, mes confrères, the pardonable pride we take in being friends of actresses, had thought this a very good occasion to let the public know, in what degree of friendship he stood



with this world-famous, beautiful singer. And so he had brought his fine carriage and an immense bouquet of American Beauties.

How his vanity had been tickled beyond expression, when later, between two rows of eagerly pressing, pushing, handkerchief-waving, viva-crying humanity he had walked down the plank, leading the bowing Josépha, on his arm, down to his carriage.

Abbott, Stoll, and Stiefel had willingly taken a back number over the infigurably sensational effect of this entrance of their new acquisition into New York, on the arm of one of the bluest-blooded "400." So, what else could they do but thank him effusively when he had introduced them to Josépha?

Thus the lady in the coquettish French widow's garb, with her tiny cap and flowing veil, looking prettier than ever, happier very likely because no creditors molested her any longer, had stepped into his carriage standing erect for a while and waving her handkerchief in recognition of the splendid reception.

And Grant, who had always loved Josépha,



in a way which she had tried to make the other love her, felt his heart beat louder with happiness as he sat down beside her svelt, black figure, thinking of future possibilities, guilty little tête-a-tête's, when already he was to be reminded of the fact that another still occupied the singer's heart entirely.

"How is Clarence? Have you seen him lately?"

This then was all the result of his troubles and kindness. What disenchantment?

How it happened he did not know, but at that moment he hated Clarence. He forgot their long friendship, and said, with a nasty sneer :

"With his mistress, parbleu, you surely did not expect to find him the same as at Paris!"

Here, however, he checked himself rudely, wishing he could retract the few angry words, so little, so petty did he feel over them.

But it was already too late. Josépha had caught the word "mistress" and snickered at the apparent show of Billy's jealousy, and



at the turn things had taken in the life of Clarence. She surely had not expected to find him the same old Clarence she had known so well in Paris, but ere this it had really been utterly unknown to her what kind of a life he had been leading after his return to New York.

It even pleased her to think that at last he must be taking life as it comes, with its blessings and sorrows and little crimes.

Thus ignoring the evident jealousy of the speaker, she only said :

“ He must have changed, indeed,” while in her mind she added, “ I shall possess him yet !”

So, in his own carriage, suffering the humiliation of having his good-looking self set in the shade behind another who was, God knows where, he felt still more humiliated over the fact that his spiteful little tell-tale had had after all only the effect of putting Josépha into much better spirits even than she had been, while he could not deny in his own honesty that he had hoped for a possible



change of feelings on Josépha's part towards Clarence, and had meant to profit by it for the furtherance of his own projects for the future.

He was glad, too, that his words had not had the desired effect on the singer. For how much he might have turned traitor to his friend, with only a little encouragement on her part, God only knows!

Therefore, he made a vow to himself that at the next opportunity offering itself, he would clear his guilty conscience before Clarence by a confession of all,



## IX.

At the Waldorf where Josépha had taken quarters, the doors of her apartments did not shut forever behind her, like they had behind most of the singing nightingales who, in most cases, would emerge from their retreat just long enough to give their performance, then go back to their seclusion.

Only an hour after her arrival, her magnetic presence was already felt everywhere, for the manager had been graciously asked to show her all the true American institutions of which she had heard so much in Paris, the barber-shop, the boot-blackening-stand, even the bar-room.

She flitted around, all over the house in her peculiarly pleasing way, riding more than once up and down in the elevators like a sportive child.

When she returned to her room her



duenna had to "take in" all the discoveries of her "voyage autour de l' hotel" as she called it.

Later on she amused herself with her parrot, listening to his "Clawrence" and "Josépha" and thinking all the time of the change in Clarence's nature, how at last he would be to her a lover such as she wanted, accepting her love without question, returning it with his own. Only no more in that saint, venerable, reverencing old way of his, but a new one, more human, more wordly. She felt so sure of that!

And then again she busied herself by looking up her "Château Earnesthorst" on the Hudson and "Chicago," which her duenna pronounced Shi-ca-go, putting the accent on the first syllable, on several of the railroad folders which she had gotten from the rack in the lobby.

Then in an open landau, for it was a bright sunny autumn day, dressed in a most fetching "robe de deuil," the black of her widow's cap coquettishly relieved by a tiny white



ruffle of delicate veiling around the edge of the bonnet and tied under her chin in a large broad bow with flowing ends, she had laid, wrapped in the most costly furs, taking in the sights of New York on its typical throughfare.

She made the driver point out to her the direction of Wall Street and wondered at the nakedness of the Metropolitan, where she was to sing, which, most likely, she had expected to be as much more magnificent than the Paris Opera House as her salary was larger.

Still on her return to the hotel, she had charmed the various reporters by: "And the Opera House, how beautiful, how well it must be to sing there. So large, before an audience of nothing but Americans, the only music-loving people in the world!"

The day of Josépha's first American appearance, or rather at the hour of seven in the evening of that day, our two friends, both in their full dress suits, met perchance at the club.



They had not seen each other since the day before Josépha's triumphal entrance into New York.

Clarence read the full account of the event in the papers and could not help but feeling his jealousy aroused by the very prominent part his friend had played.

"The famous singer then accepted the escort of Mr. William Grant, a personal friend, it appears, who drove her to the Waldorf in his own carriage." He now greeted him, however, with the old accustomed cordiality.

But honest William Grant, bethinking himself, at the sight of his friend, of the meanness of his words spoken to Josépha, now delivered his guilty conscience by a confession of all he had done and even meant to do in his passion for the singer; so that they both became moved and abundant in their praises of friendship between man and man, so much more constant and reliable than love of fickle woman!

And they might have forgotten their in-



tentions to be present at the first representation over these pretty effusions of sentiment and infusions of champagne, had they both not burned with eagerness to hear the divine Josépha.

Thus, when they entered their box, or rather Clarence's—for Billy had not remembered his promise to be present at his mother's that evening, in a row below—their feet did not move as steady as they might have, and they almost overlooked the steps leading down to the seats, stumbling, and causing quite a stir in the motionless, fervent audience.

This all in a crowd resenting the disturbance. For already into that grand silence there had waved the lamenting sweetness of violins, then the sonorous sound of trumpets, until, during the thunder of the full orchestra, Josépha made her entrance with her famous cry, "*cri d'angoisse*" which could be heard far above the roar of all the instruments, in the sublime aria :

"*Ne m'aimes-tu plus ami de mon enfance?*"



Never, no never had she sung this wonderful aria with so much pathos, so much emotion as that evening.

That wonderful cry of hers, and then the "ne m'aimes-tu plus," with which she is trying to win back the affections of her recreant lover.

Her unearthly beauty, the ivory-colored satin of her dress enhancing it beyond expression. Costly lace, rippling down over her bare arms and bosom, and the loose square folds of the heavy material down her whole figure, revealing in their drooping, unfastened effect, still the sveltness of her willowy form.

Ah, she had soon espied the one face amongst a thousand. His stooping profile had been revealed to her just at the same time, when she had uttered her "Ne m'aimes-tu plus" and when he was settling himself down into his chair.

Even from under his rapt closed eyelashes she had felt the warmth of his passionate glances and the consciousness that in his



heart she was still his all, his very blood and only happiness.

Thus she was not surprised when after this first performance there was handed to her his card. For even while her maid had braided up her beautiful hair and removed the paint from her cheeks, she showed signs of restlessness as if conscious of some one waiting. And she had urged her to more haste.

And what emotions those that swept her soul when she held in her nervous hands the little slip of pasteboard!

What was her fame, what were her triumphs, so insignificant by their ease, compared to the struggles of subjugating under the yoke of her womanly power the stubborn will of this "one" man.

At last he was hers, hers soul and body! She was to taste the infinitely sweet intoxication of love through love!

So when they stood before each other in the darkness of stage scenery; later on when they rolled together in her carriage towards



her apartments, over the quiet streets of the city, they asked no questions, made no excuses for the past, but took the present as fate's sweetest gift.

In the narrow office-street again there would be a woman waiting in the new landau below, when the footman had announced his "The carriage is waiting below, sir," and Clarence descended in the elevator.

A woman much like the other, with red hair, but more beautiful even, more queenly! A woman whose name would be known to every passer-by, many of whom would stop and chat with her, making remarks like:

"Your Marguerite last night was charming," or "Can you not find a better Romeo than Signor Bertini for your exquisite Juliet."

This woman's eyes would kindle with a sudden fire when a man's tall figure would appear under the portal of the building soon to be seated by her side.

Her beautiful red hair would gleam like the other's until the landau had turned



around the corner into Broadway. And they would pass the club, many envious glances being cast behind their moving carriage and many exclamations made, such as "lucky devil, this Clarence Willard," on their way to their establishment.

The man's face would bear a happier expression even than when seen with the other one. For Josépha was just as docile and pleasant as she, but more loving and of a mind so desirous of knowledge, that his business, speculating on the exchange, the price of oil, the forming of a corner in the market, his club life, in short, all would seem to her an interesting subject to talk about.

They were together on all occasions, in all sorts of places.

More often at the hour of six in the evening when New York's grand army of laboring men and women are returning home over the famous Brooklyn bridge in an unbroken stream of pedestrians, wagons, carriages, etc., there could be seen at the entrance below the magnificent turnout of the oil magnate



with the two liveried figures of coach and footman on the seat, as rigid as if molded of metal, the panting span of black steeds waiting impatiently, while Josépha and their master would be on the bridge above observing with rapt attention the life on the river and the "come and go" of working humanity, the endless stream of vehicles, trucks, wagons, carriages. A scene which she said recalled to her in the famous painting "*Le fin du jour*" (A day's end), with its setting winter's sun and the pulsation of city life after vesper. A picture so characteristic of America, where everybody works, rich or poor.

Still, at times, there had come moments of annoyance to the man, whenever letters written in a feminine hand, and bearing the stamp of an obscure country town arrived.

"Had he so soon forgotten her whom he had once professed to love? Was he indeed enamored of that new opera singer, Josépha, like the papers reported from time to time? Would he never send for her any more? She promised that she would never cause



him another embarrassment such as she had done, no, never! The little boy looked so much like him, she would place him with a family of brave, honest people when going back to New York. Not before. He was too sweet!"

But even in this dilemma, Clarence Willard had not been at a loss for a decision. With an ease, as though it was only a daily occurrence in his life, he had written:

"It was best that she should never come back to him. For the future of the boy he would provide. As to herself, he would put another \$50,000 to her credit in the same bank where she already had a deposit; it was a safe bank. Bitter as the draught might taste to her, it was nevertheless best for him to be frank. He had loved her indeed. Not for herself, however, as he had thought at times, but for her resemblance to the other Josépha, who had come back. Yes, he loved that opera singer, and she must not harass him with protestations, for he felt their relations could



never be the same as they had been! Nay, he knew he could hate her as he now pitied her, if she would still insist to call back the past to him. He knew "love" he could never offer her any more. If she felt that he had not been generous enough, she should not hesitate to say so; nor never hesitate, if in the future she should ever be in need of his help or advice, to address him. She was young yet, why not develop her voice so much like the famous singer's, which had attracted him first of all to her."

This and other things he had written in his cool business way, just as if making quotations to a correspondent; not the least more excitement, no effort! With this letter he had at the same time dispelled the matter from his mind, never to be disturbed again, for Mary Blake kept silent.



## X.

In a pretty cottage parlor in the obscure eastern village of which we have spoken, Mary Blake receives Clarence Willard's letter with that kind of a feeling which we all experience on such occasions, especially when we know that the contents of an insignificant looking missive as the modern letter is, that important factor in to-day's affairs, are to decide our fate, our happiness!

True, by Clarence's former cruelly cold lines, the young woman had already been deprived of all hopes of ever gaining his affections again. She had been treated by him like any other of the unfortunate, deceived women, paid off, yet in spite of all, she had been unwilling to accept this as a final decision. She had been unwilling to admit to herself that such as her fate is really the unavoidable end of every guilty love.



In pleading with him to win back his affection, all her powers of persuasion have been mustered. She has spared him reproaches for being the cause of her misery. Her letters to him contained nothing but self-accusations, excuses for having been the object of so many troubles to him.

What new emotions her soul has known since rupture, that chasm, has opened its yawning mouth between the two! She shudders when she thinks of the sudden desire she has felt to stifle the quiet, healthy breathing of her slumbering babe, without the arrival of which her relations with her lover would have been the same to-day as they had been before.

And of what amount of love her heart is capable she has also learned; for its growth has been as formidable as the growth of obstacles rapid.

At last she holds in her hand the fatal letter that is to put the seal on her destiny! At last? God knows, the uncertainty, the waiting has been pleasanter, for she feels a



foreboding of evil and cannot muster enough courage to open it, so much her hands tremble.

What must not a weak woman suffer who has no rights to demand, nor will avail herself of the rights the law gives her, if she really loves. No right to demand a reparation, just because her love has not the permission given to it by some insignificant, mocking ceremony we call law, but is as pure, as sacred, nay, more so, perhaps, than some young wife—some young mother's. True, her commercial little soul with its desire for wealth, money and pleasure, had made her fall an easier victim to the amorous wiles of Clarence Willard; but are there not as many and more marriages contracted for these very reasons? She, the ostracised of society, she, who had to hide her mistake in this obscure eastern village, had brought into her liaison with Clarence, love and faithfulness. How much of that do we find to-day under the mockery of orange blossoms and bridal veils? How much sincerity to keep the vows of



eternal faithfulness, when a young, budding maiden sells her soul to a man with money.

It is the relations of free love that are condemned by humanity. And yet they are more true, as a rule, than the sacred ties which one is too advanced to worry much about and therefore transgresses without any scruple.

Once, indeed, the young woman makes a resolute attempt, sticking her knife boldly under the back of the letter. But again she falters and bends despairingly over the cradle, whimpering softly on the little cherub's face.

And thus, between her desire to know the contents of that letter, and the fear to find her foreboding of evil fulfilled, the first few shadows of twilight begin to descend gradually on the quiet street, while suddenly, in the Catholic Church across the way, somebody strikes up on the organ, in full notes, the same quaint old melody that she was humming in the office on Wall Street that fateful day Clarence Willard spoke to her the first time. That same old melody which had clung to her as long as she could remember, which



seems to form some tie between herself and her first unknown childhood in her father's house, before she was adopted by the Blakes.

It always had a soothing effect upon her, like the effect a cradle-song has on a restless child. Perhaps it was once her own cradle-song! At any rate it gives her an idea now, for she leaves the room returning with a heavy shawl around her shoulders.

With the greatest care she picks up the little bundle of humanity, bedding its head against her young bosom, then she is seen across the street entering the half open portals of the church, where no other soul stirs save the priest before the organ.

A little later the last rays of the winter sun surround with an aureole Mary's red hair. She has taken a seat on one of the crudely put up benches, having laid her sleeping child beside her.

And so, while the same old melody, she knows so well, is floating through the sacred stillness of the edifice, the young woman braces up her entire courage under fervent



prayers. She opens the letter under the quaint accompaniment of the song that has ushered her into peaceful sleep, so many, many years ago, and reads it.

Irony of fate that it must be this same old cradle-song that peals forth on her ear at the moment when she is to receive the cruelest blow which can be dealt a woman by a man in whom she has confided so implicitly? Is it this melody perhaps that makes her seek sleep, eternal sleep, complete oblivion of all earthly troubles, a few weeks later, as we will see?

There is a loud cry, the playing stops abruptly and the priest turns around on his stool looking down on the cause of the disturbance. He had been absolutely ignorant of the presence of the young woman. For while his fingers enticed forth from the ivory keys the simple notes; his mind has wandered back also, like Mary's, back into the past, with the difference, however, of his full recollection of all those scenes with which the song is associated in his memory. He goes back many, many years to the front porch of



a pretty cottage, holding a girl on his knees, another one standing beside him ; both girls singing the quaint lullaby.

Just then he hears the cry, turns around and looks down on a livid face bent back over the back of the bench. At the same time the child which he beholds next to her begins to cry.

In a few long leaps he is down the steps and by the side of the fainting woman. Without another moment's thought he gathers up her lifeless form in one arm, with the other the wailing child, and with this human freight retires to his residence which adjoins the church.

It needs but the sprinkling of a little fresh water on the woman's face to restore her to consciousness. Yet short as the time is to do this, the priest has staggered under the light of his study, at the sight of her features.

"My God ! can it be possible?" he murmurs. But already her eyes have opened, looking around in bewilderment, not realizing what has happened, and as of one just awakening from an unpleasant dream.



"Where am I?" she says. "Where is my child?" and then remembering, no doubt, the contents of the fatal letter, she begins to sob anew, ever and again kissing the child which the priest had handed to her.

"Don't cry," the priest's kind voice whispers. He has turned down the light and the room is almost dark. "Confide in me, my daughter; confide in me, my child, for life is full of sorrows; but sorrows shared by others, do not seem half so burdensome to bear."

There is something in his voice that soothes her, a tone of such deep consoling power, a new accent which she has never heard before in the priest's voice, although she has been to service every Sunday. There is something in his eyes too, an expression of so much suffering, of that purification, which suffering gives to these mirrors of man's soul.

His arm is around her shoulder supporting her; it gives her such comfort, she does not know why. And again his voice pleads:

"Confide in me, my daughter, the cross is



heavy but penitence lightens the burden. Confide in me as your priest whose lips will be sealed as though it had been an auricular confession. I speak to you as one friend, one sinner, one sufferer to another. As a strong man who has almost broken down under the load of his own guilt, to a frail woman whom he wishes to assist carrying hers. But if it will harass you to tell me your troubles, or if it should cause you more pain to do so, calm yourself my child, and say no more to-day; but let me pray for you and comfort your soul as much as it is in my power to do. And let me lay my hands on your throbbing temples for it may restore order to your disturbed nerves. Or, if it will quiet you more to pillow your head on my breast, like you would on your father's if he were present, do so without hesitation, my daughter, for I am an old man, old before my time, with one foot in my grave, and the follies of youth lie far away in the dim past!"

His voice then raises itself in a fervent prayer as he pulls her down on her knees.



The darkness of the room, the accents of truthfulness in the man's prayer, his very words indicating that he has read her soul, have their effect on the woman.

Already her head has sunk on the stranger's breast; her lips repeat in murmur his solemn prayer. And presently the scene is reversed, when she herself takes up the thread of his silenced pleading by an ardent supplication to her Maker which the priest repeats.

"I have sinned, oh Heavenly Father: My soul craved for wealth, station and those many things of the world Thou teachest us to despise, but which our human hearts are yearning for more than the glories of Thy kingdom. In the dust I kneel before Thee, pleading for Thy fatherly pardon. Thou who readest our hearts knowest the plea I wish to offer for my fall, my love for the man, though I do not deny the part his earthly possessions have played to allure me into his arms to my own ruin. Thou knowest, too, oh God, I bear this man, who has abandoned me for another, no malice, and if



I lay before Thee questioning Thy justice, because Thou makest me suffer, me and the innocent babe, while he is permitted to go on in his sinfulness, as though man were exempt from all pangs of conscience; my Father, it is because it is hard to say I forgive, without Thou fillest our hearts with the power to do so; for our mind is willing but the flesh is weak!"

"The old, old story," the priest murmurs, "human fickleness the cause of so much suffering!" but starting up from his short meditative soliloquy, he remarks to the woman, "there is a God in Heaven, there is a law in the world compelling those that——" He gets no further, for the woman's voice interrupts him.

"Law? Do you speak of the law man makes; that law we discarded in loving each other as we did, he and I? Do you speak of the law that allows you a certain monetary consideration for a lifelong misery? Ah, but you know not a woman's love, you know not the power it gives a woman to even bless



the man to whose wrongs she owes all her sorrows. This is the power I crave, this the feeling I beg God to bestow upon my heart. I have tasted the sweet bliss of happiness, for the sake of that short blessing I must gain the power to forgive him."

In the presence of this conviction what can the priest do but to pray with her, pray for the strength that she beseeches from the Almighty.

But even while he is muttering her words, even while his hands are busy gently stroking the outlines of her features, the burning balls in her orbits, his thoughts have wandered back many years and he thinks how much like her she looks, how her age must be the same as that of the one still missing, the other's sister whom he has found within the past year even.

Still, when a little later he escorts the young woman back to her quarters across the street, telling her to return the following day and to talk it all over with him; his placid face does not betray what tumults this scene has aroused in his soul.



Only when the door is closed behind the young mother and her child ; only when he has entered his church, the mask drops, his features look drawn as if in pain.

As he goes down the aisle, his feet touch a piece of paper lying on the floor.

He stoops down to pick it up mechanically, without thinking. And although it is too dark to see, yet the creases where it had been folded and the way it had been folded, leaves no doubt in his mind of it being a letter dropped by the fainting woman, just an hour or so ago.

When he reaches his study where the lamp is still burning dimly, his giant frame drops into an easy chair and his mind sinks into a profound meditation,

The episode with the young woman, or rather something in her personality have revived some of the saddest years in this man's history. Sadder now, when, stripped of their allurements and embellishments of youth, beauty and passion ; deprived of all possible excuses of human weaknesses, they



stand naked before the penitent eye of this inexorably severe old priest near the gate of his death, as it were.

Father Bryan is indeed a strange character, a very devout Catholic.

He has only come to the village five years ago; but why he had accepted this rather insignificant post, in a place so far off the trend of travel; why he had given the preference to this obscure village over a much wealthier diocese in one of the Atlantic seaport towns, which had been offered to him, nobody knew, for Father Bryan is not a communicative man, although eloquent in his sermons and universally kind to everybody.

And so as he sits down, groaning aloud "What a life of sorrow and misery this is," we follow him in his meditation to places that you and I have visited together at the beginning of this story; into that parsonage in the beautiful city of the plains.

Father Bryan indeed is no other than Edward Drayton. The orthodox Catholic priest, no other than the broad-minded Pres-



byterian preacher, who horrified his congregation one day by mysteriously disappearing with a wealthy widow, years ago, in the city at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

Has he been happy?

Who is so, mon ami, when one's desires have been gratified; when the mists of human passions have been cleared away from our brain, leaving it clear to judge our actions, clear to take in the situation. If our brain were not so susceptible to respond to all the emotions of our nerves, there would be less crimes, less murders, less adultery; in short, less rash deeds to-day!

Has he been contented?

Who indeed is so when he possesses that which to steal has seemed so much pleasure!

And the remorse, the regrets, the mortifications and self-accusations, when a few days after his arrival with Mrs. Cobourne, in the city of the Pacific slope the:

**"DRAYTON-COBOURNE SCANDAL!"**



heads a newspaper column in heavy print, publishing his elopement and the death of his invalid wife! For Edward Drayton has a conscience; it had only been stifled by human passion.

Decidedly the lover, the Reverend Edward Drayton, has been quite a different man from the morose companion he becomes as time steals on; as both, having tasted the full satiety of their expectations, which, after all, had been nothing but disappointments, tired of their relations.

No wonder then that one day the eternal love and friendship they have sworn to each other, suffers the death blow of a sudden rupture which sends the two actors into two opposite directions.

The woman over to Europe, the man to the wilderness of Montana, or some other western state, where he emerges under the new identity of Mr. Edward Bryan, a man applying for admission into the Catholic faith.

He had no trouble in gaining admission,



although he was just a stranger, an educated man apparently, about whose past only this much is known : " That he has been a member of some Presbyterian church before, but now wishes to be taken into the fold of that of the Catholic religion."

And what church would not feel equally elated over the conversion of any member of another belief, not its own ; of an educated man capable of thought ? What church would not willingly open its doors to the one knocking who stammers as he enters through the portals " I have sought for truth, I have not found it where I come from, but I feel sure that I shall discover it here."

And so it must not surprise us too much, when we meet this man again far away from the scene of his former actions, in an obscure eastern village, a good ways off the usual trend of travel, as Father Bryan, a devout Catholic priest, a silent middle-aged man, prematurely aged by troubles which he hides, however, under his assumed new rôle.

But he has kept himself informed about



the turn things have taken in the parsonage after his wife's death. He had known of the adoption of Mary by the Blakes, although he has lost track of her entirely after the removal of the Blakes from D——. He had lost sight of Elsa, the elder, a few years after her arrival in Paris, until one day the whole American press had heralded over this broad land of ours the coming of a new American singer, the great Josépha, giving her biography with the minutest details; the name of her father, the name he once bore, Edward Drayton.

Thus he had found the older, but Mary was still missing.

And now, as somebody enters the study, an old woman-servant, saying, "My, how the lamp smells," and turns up the wick, the light inundates the study for our inspection. We behold the priest, the kind eyes, the giant-framed body, all changed, so much older, until recognition is almost impossible. And we notice on the wall over his desk a picture of Josépha representing her as Marguerite.



One of those photographs we saw displayed in the stores on Broadway, the day it was rumored that she would appear at the Metropolitan Opera House during the coming season.

And while we proceed with our examination, Father Bryan has risen, still holding the sheet of paper that he picked up in the church and gazes at the singer's picture.

"How much this poor woman resembles her! So young, too, just about the same age Mary would be, and even her hair of the same hue as hers!" He does not proceed in his verbal meditation, a slight tremble shakes his frame, his hand touches his brow, as though a thought had struck him, and again he reels back into his chair.

And then, while staring before him and pondering while mumbling the name of her he is thinking of, Mary Blake, and playing with the sheet which he has mechanically folded up and opened in turns; his eyes fall on the very name he has just pronounced. The letter is addressed to Mrs, Mary Blake.



“ Oh God, hast Thou no mercy, hast Thou not punished me enough by denying me the right to claim the one found child? Must I swallow the very dregs of this bitter cup by discovering the younger disgraced, her young life blighted?” he murmurs as he continues reading the letter which dropped from Mary’s hands when she fainted.

Fate knows no mercy, indeed!

He has reached the part where Clarence Willard admits and confesses to Mary his love for the singer; where he advises her to take up music because her voice is so much like the other’s; where he tells her that it was this very voice that first attracted his attention to her.

There is an occasional groan, a groan which could be taken for an expression of physical pain as well as psychical, for this man has been so accustomed to hiding his emotions all these years past, that his face has again adopted the usual placid look.

When he sits down to supper with this additional burden on his already overloaded



guilty conscience, his composure is the same as ever, although he does not partake of food.

Nor does he sleep that night. Before his eyes there rises again and again the face of the pale woman, his daughter, he has held in his arms some hours ago ; and the other face, also, that of a daughter whom, however, he has only seen in the picture.

Shall he make himself known to Mary ? Shall he tell her : " I am your father ; I left your mother ; I left you. Had I not deserted you, your young life might not have been blighted as it is now ! You might have been to-day some man's happy wife and not the mother of your nameless child ! " Shall he tell her all that or keep silent, comfort her, aid her as much as it is in his power to do ?

Surely, as to himself, how gladly he would shake off his mantle of hypocrisy, how willingly he would humble himself before her. But it might only complicate matters, it might prove a fatal blow to the chagrined mother ! And so he adopts the course of silence as the



best, and racks his brain over for all the words of comfort he will speak to her in the morning.

But Fate says no.

In the morning when Father Bryan inquires for the lady in the cottage across the street, he is informed that she has suddenly decided to go back to New York, and in fact has taken last night's train.



## XI.

At a very late hour of the night, the darkness of one of the side streets of New York was suddenly interrupted by a stream of light, caused by the equally sudden opening of a front door.

In this narrow, luminous path, which stretched wellnigh across to the opposite side, there could be seen a tall figure of a woman moving into the very middle of the street, from where she scanned it with questioning glances in either direction, as far, in fact, as the darkness allowed her to do.

There was in her nervous restlessness, the excited twitching of her fingers, something that indicated either a state of great worry and pain or even a mind void of lucidity.

But even while she was pondering in her mind what to do in the face of these silent



nocturnal sleeping shadows of man's abode ; the stillness of the street re-echoed from the thunder of approaching wheels and the clack-clack from horses' hoofs.

With the exclamation "God be thanked," the form advanced still farther into the street, calling aloud, in an excited voice, something that sounded like "help," at the same time waving her long arms around her in the air.

However, her movements must have been watched for some time from the distance, and some conclusion arrived at between driver and master as to the object of her excitement. For hardly had the shying team been brought to a standstill, when a man's tall form emerged from the carriage, while the window of the closed door was lowered by a person on the inside just long enough to overhear the excited talk ; perhaps, also, to find out how long the carriage was to be detained.

It could be seen now, since the tall figure was bathed in the stream of light emitted from the open door and the carriage lanterns, that she was a woman of some forty years,



and her station that of a servant. That she was perfectly lucid but frantic with horror and anxiety her story showed, which she gave out of breath in words tumbling over each other

“ Her beautiful mistress had made an attempt on her own and her child’s life, a successful one she feared, unless it was not too late to save *her* at least. For the child there was no hope, it had been cold already when, awakened in the middle of the night by a strong smell of gas, she had hurried down, fearing that something was wrong. For her mistress, always so depressed in mind and so despondent of late, had been more so that day, so queer, insisting that she should sleep upstairs and leave her alone. Ah, why had she not thought that it had been done only for this, why had she not slept below in spite of all? Her beautiful mistress, so young, possessing apparently all the money and everything that she wanted. Her poor, poor mistress, but God be thanked, it might still not be too late.”



And with these words she had preceded the man into the hall, where the great current of air from all the open windows and doors blew in chilly gusts, making the gas flare up in the most fantastic shapes.

This man was Clarence, on his way home with his guilty love, coming from Delmonico's. The other person in the carriage, waiting outside, Josépha.

Little had he thought, a few hours ago, when sitting down with Josépha to supper at the famous caterer's, as they so often did after the play, especially when Josépha had sung. Josépha and he basking themselves in the sunshine of each other's happy, contented smiles; making plans about the future; little, I say, had he thought that this future would have in store for him, preparing it even at the same time when he was so free from cares, so blessedly happy with his guilty love, one of the saddest trials of his life.

Even while he followed the woman, a feeling permeated his whole body as of some departed known spirit hovering around him.



When he entered the room he at once understood the peculiar sensation.

He did not utter a cry, he only sank down with the weight of his guilt before the bed. For there—there, in the fulness of youth, she whom he had loved for her resemblance to Josépha, dead! Dead also the fat little baby boy, his child! What emotions must have stormed through the man's heart at that moment. What self-reproaches, what accusations at the sight of his victims.

The thought of saving life, if such was possible, had been forgotten by man and woman alike. For, overwhelmed, he had sunk down heavily on his knees over the small white hand hanging out from the costly laces of the nightdress; while the woman, surprised at first, but instantly comprehending that she was witnessing the "finale" of some great human drama, crouched down in a corner whimpering softly. Thinking how much better off after all her mistress was "dead" than "alive," with another one in her way; the other, whose diamonds she had seen glittering in the darkness of the carriage!



However, life had already fled long before the two bodies were discovered by the woman. The smaller one, of course, had stiffened quicker than its mother's. The gas had indeed produced the long sleep of oblivion from which there is no awakening. All efforts to restore them to consciousness would have been in vain.

But out in the cold winter night, where the spirited horses were stamping the ground impatiently, Josépha, in the recess of her carriage, wrapped in costly furs, was wondering what had happened. When, after hearing the woman's story, she had pulled up the carriage window and huddled herself well back into her corner; her thoughts took up the thread of her late conversation with Clarence, at that point where they had planned a trip on his fine yacht into southern waters, South Carolina, in fact, more particularly Charleston, his native city.

Yet, pleasant as the thoughts were, suddenly she had become conscious of the cold and begun to wonder why neither one of the



two had returned to let her know the particulars about the case!

“If there is hope for restoration to life,” she reasoned, “one or the other should have come back for help, for a doctor, long ago. And if recovery is out of the question, why does he stay so long with a dead woman he not even knows?”

So, after directing many anxious glances into the still open, quiet hall, she, too, had stepped out, shivering as she did in the icy current of air.

And presently she stood in the open door of a richly furnished bedroom, before a scene of infinite sadness.

She had looked down wonderingly—startled—on the counterpart of herself; this woman in the bloom of youth, her infant boy clutched to her bare breast, and the convulsed figure of Clarence crouched before the bed. And she had taken in the whole situation in a glance, all! And did this scene arouse in her a fit of anger, jealousy and wrath? did she have recourse even to



other thoughts than those of pity, of commiseration?

Respecting the sacredness of the scene, she hoped to recede noiselessly as she had come, back to her carriage, where she intended to wait; when suddenly the rustle of her silken skirts became noticeable at one and the same time to both the stooping figures—man and woman.

With a groan Clarence had raised himself up from the floor, an agonized, terrified look on his pale face. He expected a sneer, a word of scorn, in fact, anything else sooner than the sympathizing little "Poor Clarence!" and "Oh, how very sad!" for he felt so guilty, so criminal, and he perceived at once that Josépha had guessed all.

And so, taking her outstretched little hand in his with a thankful fervent grip, he stammered something about the "draught," and "It being no place for her." Then, after whispering a few words into the woman's ear he led Josépha to the carriage, which soon rolled away.



And the silence upon which they both had entered, was only broken once, when Clarence began to relieve, by confession, his guilt-smitten conscience.

However, even from this painful task he was to be saved by Josépha's kind, "Don't excite yourself, *Pauvre ami*, I know all! You owe me no explanation, but the poor girl, you owe her much; indeed, we must both look after her funeral in the morning."

With that she had clung still closer, and her sweet caressing ways had soothed him wonderfully.

Only at an early morning hour, slumber approached Josépha's couch.

Not that she suffered from self-reproach of having been in some way the cause of the tragedy. On the contrary, her conscience felt exceptionally clear, if we will admit that she still possessed one.

Although her thoughts had wandered back once more to the suicide's bed, it was not so much the sadness of the scene that drew her there again, as the remarkable resemblance the woman bore to her.



That the dead one was the same to whom Billy Grant had referred as "his mistress;" about that there existed no doubt in her mind. It showed her again what power she really possessed over the destiny of Clarence; how indeed, even in his other "amours" he had looked for one like her, or had been forced to love the other, because she looked like herself.

About this singular resemblance she pondered no more in any other direction, into which the fact might have taken her that she once possessed a sister.

The day of the woman's funeral, Josépha surprised Clarence by appearing once again in her pretty "robe de deuil," which she had discarded some time ago.

She had shown much delicacy in the whole sad affair, which indeed had revealed to him still another side of her strange nature.

And thus they had followed the elegant hearse, together, sad and silent. Josépha feeling a closer affinity towards her lover



since the woman's death, an affinity of guilt, of crime, as it were. Clarence recalling in his mind, the scene when he had stood between his two guilty loves; one dead, the other full of life, so frivolous, so strange with all her questionable past; and yet so kind, so sweet!

To enter into his intimate relations with the singer had cost him no effort, his views of life having changed entirely. To speak of marriage to her, although there were no obstacles in the way then, he had never thought about any more.

But there, before that small mound of earth, so silent, yet so full of meaning, the smothering sparks of his slumbering conscience had suddenly caught fire again.

The vow of giving the sanction of the law to his guilty union with Josépha was typical of the old Clarence we met a few years ago in Paris.

And so, when right after the close of the opera season, the oil magnate's fine yacht was steaming out of New York harbor, on the planned southern trip, it bore to the old



southern city a very happy couple, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence F. Willard.

But had Josépha, on the eventful night, or even the following day, perceived a small flat package, tied with a narrow silken ribbon and well hidden between the bodies of mother and child ; had she untied this same bundle which had been laid into the woman's coffin by her side, she would have beheld the faces of two to whom she and the dead one owed their existence. They were sisters.

THE END.







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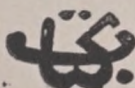
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
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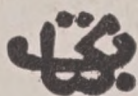
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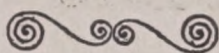


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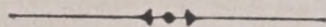
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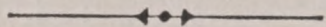
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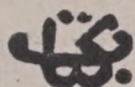
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